

# EXPLORATION SUPPORTS

Diagnostic Review and Planning for AECs  
and Online Schools



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

## EASI Route: Exploration Supports – AEC and Online Schools

### Introduction

The Diagnostic Review and Planning for Alternative Education Campuses (AECs) and Online schools is ideal for schools that are working to prioritize improvement efforts. The support is launching its sixth year and has provided support to more than 20 AECs or Online schools. The service is meant to help schools prioritize improvement efforts, develop implementation plans, and connect with other school leaders. The service is designed based on the unique needs and focus of AECs and Online schools.

1. Self- Assessment: Using a CDE tool (described below) designed specifically for AECs and online schools, school leadership teams conduct a self-assessment on current areas of strength and growth.
2. On-Site Diagnostic Review: A team of 2-3 CDE staff and a current school leader will spend at least one day at the school to conduct a diagnostic review examining the design, ongoing operations, and practices of the school through review of materials, interviews of staff, students and families, and observations.
3. Formal Report, Prioritization, and Implementation planning: CDE will provide a formal report, support prioritization, and assist with development of an implementation and short cycle plans aligned to the Unified Improvement Plan.
4. Connection to other Alternative Education Campuses or online schools, which may include:
  - Webinars and phone calls to share practices
  - Structured site visits to observe and explore strategies

### [Framework for Effective Practices](#)

CDE staff have developed a framework for effective practices of AEC and online schools. This framework uses the [Four Domains](#) that CDE is using for their Quality Schools School Improvement initiatives. These components were adapted based on research from the National Alternative Education Associations ([NAEA 15 Exemplary Practices](#)), national research on effective high school practices, rubrics from iNACOL on blended learning, and observation of Colorado schools and structures for alternative education and online learning.

### Eligible Applicant and Prioritization

**Eligibility.** Applicants must be:

- Designated Alternative Education Campuses (AECs) or Online school for the previous and current school years. All types of AECs are eligible (e.g., online, blended, charter, district run).

### For More Information, Contact:

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- Identified for Comprehensive Support (CS), Targeted Support (TS), or Additional Targeted (Additional TS) through ESSA or received a rating of Priority Improvement or Turnaround in the most recent rating. Schools on watch will also be eligible.

**Prioritization.** In the event that not all EASI proposals can be funded, proposals that meet grant expectations will be funded in the order of the EASI school-level prioritization list. Schools with the highest number of prioritization points will be funded first.

### Allowable Use of Funds

The duration of the services within the Exploration route is January 2024 – June 30, 2025. Schools are eligible for funding of up to \$22,000 for year one for the review, stakeholder engagement, and improvement planning (e.g., collaboration time, retreats, stipends, substitutes, hosting a community meeting) and up to \$20,000 for year two to support early implementation activities (e.g., staff to coordinate improvement efforts, job-embedded learning opportunities). An LEA/school may use the information obtained through the review and improvement planning process to develop an application for additional funds in the District Design and Led route in a subsequent EASI application.

Funding for this opportunity may be used for:

- Costs associated with the review visit (e.g., substitutes, stipends) and all staff debrief of the findings (e.g., stipends, copying)
- Costs associated with travel to other sites

While this is an exploration grant, a small amount of funds may be set aside for initial implementation after the review with approval from CDE.

Funds from this opportunity must be used to **supplement and not supplant** any federal, state, and local funds currently being used to provide activities. Each year, funds should be obligated by June 30 and schools are able to request reimbursement on federal funds through September 30. A district/school may carry funds forward within the grant duration years. However, this amount should be reasonable and based on the school’s grant and/or improvement plan and approval must be obtained. Note: At the end of participation in the grant period, any non-requested federal funds will be rescinded by CDE and any unspent state funds should be returned to CDE.

### Important Program Dates

January	Award Notifications
January	Diagnostic kickoff and webinar
January - May	Diagnostic visit from CDE staff, completion of site visits
May-October	Monthly check-ins with CDE staff to support follow-up
June	Submit revisions to the original budget for early implementation funds/carryover (if applicable)
October	UIP due for LEAs/schools for public posting and CDE review of plan for documentation of grant requirements
June 30, 2025	Funds must be expended
Ongoing	Submit any revisions to the original budget for approval.

### Evaluation and Reporting

Districts receiving funds under this grant opportunity are required to:

- Incorporate findings into their Unified Improvement Planning Process
- Provide feedback to CDE on the tool and process that are used as part of this service



- Submit the Annual Financial Report (AFR) to CDE

### **Program Assurances**

Districts receiving funds under this grant opportunity are required to the following in addition to assurances in the EASI application:

- Use the findings of the Diagnostic Review to inform the comprehensive needs assessment of the school's improvement plan and include selected strategy(s) in the Unified Improvement Plan.

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND RESOURCES**

Colorado Department of Education's EASI Website  
[www.cde.state.co.us/fedprograms/easiapplication](http://www.cde.state.co.us/fedprograms/easiapplication)