



COLORADO
Department of Education

Funding Opportunity (updated 3/13/26)

Special Education Teacher Shortage Grant

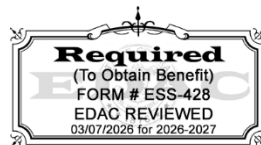
Funded by IDEA Part B and awarded through the CDE Office of Special Education

Pre-recorded application information webinar available on the [Special Education Teacher Shortage Grant](#) website by March 23, 2026.

Intent to Apply Due: Monday, April 27, 2026

Applications Due: Monday, May 4, 2026, by 4:00 pm MST

Applications will open in GAINS on Monday, March 23, 2026, and close on Monday, May 4, 2026.



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Note: The following version of the application is intended as a reference document for instructions and grant application planning purposes.

Applications for the Special Education Teacher Shortage RFA must be submitted in [GAINS](#).

Submission of application materials either in hard copy or via E-mail will not be accepted.

The application window will open in GAINS on Monday, March 23, 2026, and close on Monday, May 4, 2026, at 4 pm.

[More information about GAINS is available on CDE's website.](#)

Accessing GAINS

School District and BOCES Applicants

- Contact your district Local Access Manager (LAM) to receive access to GAINS. Documentation and training on this process for LAMs is available on [CDE's GAINS Training webpage](#).

**Intent to Apply Due: Monday, April 27, 2026.
Applications Due: Monday, May 4 2026, by 4 pm**

Introduction and Purpose

Purpose

The Colorado Department of Education’s Office of Special Education is offering 2026–2027 IDEA grant funding to administrative units and local education agencies to address the longstanding shortage of special education teachers—a challenge consistently reported since the late 1990s (Aldeman, 2024; Bettini & Gilmour, 2024; CDE, 2024; Harper, Gilmour, & Galea, 2022; McVey & Trinidad, 2019).

The grant will support a cohort of Colorado teacher candidates working toward full licensure. Eligible candidates are individuals who already hold a minimum of a bachelor’s degree and seek a Master of Arts degree with a special education endorsement through a Colorado Institution of Higher Education. This includes those enrolled in educator preparation programs for Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments, Teachers of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing, Early Childhood Special Educators, and Special Education Generalists.

Funding will cover one year of a two-year program. Upon completion, graduates will be prepared to fill hard-to-staff special education positions across Colorado.

Historical and current studies consistently show that each dollar spent on recruiting high-quality teachers and deepening their knowledge and skills nets greater gains in student learning than any other use of an education dollar (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Darling-Hammond, Hylar, & Gardner, 2017; Kraft, Blazar, & Hogan, 2018; Papay & Kraft, 2015; Popova, Evans, & Arancibia, 2016). As a result, the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) is awarding limited funds to a Local Education Agency (LEA) / Administrative Unit (AU) to subsidize, incentivize, and recruit a cohort of 5-10 rural special education teacher candidates. These candidates will complete the required coursework to earn their special education teacher license through a Colorado Institution of Higher Education.

The Grantee will be responsible for recruiting and providing continuous assistance to the cohort of teacher candidates throughout each candidate’s educator preparation program experience. Successful teacher candidates are bolstered by gaining access to essential resources and guidance throughout their pre-service training and early stages of their careers. Grantees accepting these funds must enter into a binding contract with the special education teacher candidate to work for the district for 36 months (three school years) after completing their coursework. If the teacher candidate fails to meet this requirement, they must return prorated tuition funds to the grantee fiscal agent, who will return the funds to the CDE.

Colorado’s rural communities face the most severe teacher shortages in special education, disproportionately impacting students with disabilities. Key obstacles to teacher retention include geographic isolation, lack of professional development and coaching opportunities, and resource disparities. Limited access to advanced educational resources and support services further exacerbates the situation. Addressing these challenges requires collaboration with key community partners and a systematic approach, as expecting one entity to solve the myriad issues alone is untenable. Partnerships aim to mitigate the impacts of high debt and other challenges associated with program and course completion. Increasing long-term job placement and providing positive mentoring and induction experiences are crucial for districts. Well-designed strategies to support program completers will help reduce teacher shortages. A collaborative effort involving the Colorado Department of Education (CDE), local education authorities, and community organizations is essential to develop sustainable solutions.

The [Special Education Teacher Shortage Request for Application \(RFA\)](#) seeks to incentivize partnerships to recruit, train, and retain certified special education teachers, to ensure that students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)

will benefit from receiving specially designed instruction. Working together to create a sustainable and supportive environment for educators ultimately benefits all students. CDE is asking Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and Administrative Units (AUs) to serve as fiscal agents in partnership with university educator preparation programs to recruit, employ, and support special education teacher candidates from preservice to induction. By fostering partnerships at the state, regional, and district levels, it is possible to create a robust support system that ensures every student, regardless of location, has access to qualified and dedicated educators.

These strategies will significantly contribute to reducing teacher shortages by addressing root causes and providing targeted support. The Special Education Teacher Shortage RFA aims to incentivize partnerships among state agencies, local education authorities, and institutions of higher education to recruit, train, and retain certified special education teachers. This initiative ensures that students with IEPs receive the specially designed instruction they need to thrive academically and socially. By working together, we can create a sustainable and supportive environment for educators, fostering professional growth and job satisfaction. Ultimately, these efforts will benefit all students with disabilities, leading to a more inclusive and effective educational system that meets the diverse needs of every learner.

Recognizing the unique barriers rural districts / AUs face in attracting and retaining qualified special education teachers, this program aims to directly address these challenges by providing financial support and tailored recruitment strategies to:

- Increase the number of qualified special education teachers in Colorado who are prepared to effectively plan and implement [Specially Designed Instruction \(SDI\) And Accommodations | CDE](#).
- Recruit special education teacher candidates enrolled in Master's Degree programs for:
 - Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments
 - Teachers of the Deaf or Hard of Hearing
 - Early Childhood Special Educators
 - Special Education Generalists
- Address shortages in hard-to-fill special education teaching positions in Colorado administrative unit.
- Prioritize funding for [rural* and small rural**](#) Administrative Units (AUs) / Local Education Agencies (LEAs)
 - * *Rural school districts are located a certain distance from large urban areas and have 6,500 students or less.*
 - ** *Small rural districts have fewer than 1,000 students.*
- Formalize commitments from teacher candidates to teach in “hard-to-fill” special education programs/classrooms for three years after completing certification.
- Reduce the financial burden of candidates to become fully credentialed special education teachers.
- Identify corresponding measures of in-kind funding shared by the LEA, the IHE, and other sources to reduce or offset the financial burden on the teacher candidate.
- Identify 50% matching funds from the LEA, EPP, and other sources to supplement grant funds.
- Provide a timeline on how funds will be strategically dispersed to decrease the likelihood that teacher candidates will not incur long-term debt.

Applicants will address each of the following four objectives:

- Reduce the financial burden of candidates to become fully trained special education teachers.
- Identify how equal measures of in-kind funding (i.e., tuition reimbursement, travel expenses, fees, professional development costs associated with course requirements, etc.) are shared by the LEA, the IHE, and other sources to reduce or offset the financial burden of the teacher candidate.
- Matching funds from the LEA /AU and other sources (i.e., Local, State, IDEA, Grants) are used to supplement grant funds and defray long-term debt incurred by the teacher candidate.
- Provide a timeline on how funds will be strategically dispersed to decrease the likelihood that teacher candidates will not incur long-term debt.

Eligible Applicants and Priority Criteria

The AU / LEA applicant must be up to date in submitting the AU's comprehensive program plan, budget, and data compliance requirements of all districts to the Colorado Department of Education (CDE). The RFA packet must include a completed application form, required supporting evidence, and be received within the application submission window. If the grant application is not completed correctly or does not include the required documents, the AU may be asked to adjust the original application.

- **Local Education Providers (LEPs)** are eligible to apply for this opportunity.

An eligible LEP is:

- A School District that has a regional collaborative partnership between the school district, group of school districts, and institutes of Higher Education (IHE).
- A Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) that has a regional collaborative partnership between the school district, group of school districts, and institutes of Higher Education (IHE).

Interested charter schools will need to be included in the authorizer's application.

Applicants who have previously received funding through the Special Education Teacher Shortage Grant are eligible to apply for this funding opportunity. Narrative responses must clearly describe current grant-funded activities and services that demonstrate how additional funding will expand, augment, or sustain these efforts. The review process will also consider prior expenditure of funds and the quality of program implementation.

The purpose of these funds is to aid AUs / LEAs by incentivizing and recruiting potential special education teacher candidates to complete their certification and enter the workforce, thereby reducing teacher shortages. Available grant funding will be distributed to Colorado Administrative Units / Local Education Agencies (AUs / LEAs) demonstrating high need based on priority criteria. Preference will be given to the applicants who can provide evidence in the following areas:

- RFA proposals from [rural* and small rural**](#) LEAs / AUs.
 - *Rural school districts are located a certain distance from large urban areas and have 6,500 students or less.
 - ***Small rural districts have fewer than 1,000 students.*

Available Funds and Duration of Grant

Approximately \$180,000 is available for the 2026-2027 fiscal year, contingent upon IDEA Part B funding. Awards will range from \$10,000 to \$180,000, depending on the number of grantees meeting the priority areas. Grants will be awarded for a one-year term beginning in the 2026-2027 fiscal year.

Additional grant funding for subsequent years will be contingent upon annual appropriations by the Exceptional Student Services Unit of the Colorado Department of Education. and grantees meeting all grant, fiscal, and reporting requirements. Additional grant funding opportunities for subsequent years will depend on annual appropriations by the United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, and the grantees' compliance with all grants, fiscal, and reporting requirements. Funded applicants for the 2026-2027 school year are not guaranteed any additional funding beyond the 2026-2027 fiscal year at this time. Funds must be expended by **June 30, 2027**. There will be no carryover of funds.

- **Funding Use:** Applicants who have received funds from other CDE Grants (e.g., Educator Talent, Counselor Corp, etc.) within the past two years may apply for this funding opportunity, but the narrative must list and describe grant activities and services used by the LEA/ AU over the past two years. The description must identify how these funds will increase the AU's / LEA's capacity to expand, supplement, or sustain special education teacher

recruitment/retention activities. Past expenditure of funds and quality of program implementation will be considered.

- **Tuition Costs:** Funds must be used to offset costs for tuition and fees related to special education certification programs in Colorado Institutions of Higher Education.
- **Other Costs:** Educational materials, books, and necessary classroom supplies for teacher candidates. Travel expenses for in-person, program-related or course related activities.
- **Field Placement:** The IHE will ensure teacher candidates receive field placements within the LEA that is funding their tuition.
- **Identify In-kind Costs:** Professional development activities that enhance special education teaching skills. Mentorship programs and coaching for teacher candidates. Technology tools (e.g., laptops, internet access) for candidates in remote or rural areas to support online learning.

Allowable Use of Funds

A Local Education Provider that receives a grant under the program shall use the money to recruit and train a cohort of special education teacher candidates to obtain their special education endorsement. Preference will be given to the selection of special education teacher candidates from rural and underserved districts.

Allowable services or activities include

A Local Education Provider that receives a grant under the program shall use the money to recruit and train a cohort of special education teacher candidates to obtain their special education endorsement. Preference will be given to the selection of special education teacher candidates from rural and underserved districts.

Funding should be used for the following **allowable services or activities**:

1. Purchased Service Contract with an Institute of Higher Education for activities including but not limited to:
 - a. Tuition and fees for special education certification programs, educational materials, books, necessary classroom supplies for teacher candidates; and professional development activities that enhance special education teaching skills.
 - b. Curriculum improvement services, counseling and guidance services, library, and media support services, and contracted instructional services.
 - c. Travel expenses for program-related professional development or coursework activities, mentorship programs, and coaching for teacher candidates as an in-kind expense. Additional in-kind costs include technology tools (e.g., laptops, internet access) for candidates in remote or rural areas to support online learning.
 - d. Program development and training related to educator preparation program requirements and costs associated with teacher candidates training experiences

Examples of ineligible expenses

- Expenses not directly related to the project
- Food items
- Furniture such as desks and chairs
- Childcare
- Out-of-state conferences (neither as a presenter nor as a participant)
- Basic computer hardware and software
- Equipment or materials not associated with instruction
- Hiring consultants or coaches to support educational program navigation of teacher candidates
- Hiring for district positions

Indirect Costs

- The district’s approved indirect costs are limited to the first \$50,000 in terms of the amount allocated to Purchased Services.
- Indirect costs are not allowable on tuition reimbursement related expenditures.

Evaluation and Reporting

Each Education Provider that receives a grant through the Special Education Teacher Shortage RFA is required to report, at a minimum, the following information to the Department on or before **June 30, 2027**:

Reporting Requirements, include:

- **Strength of Partnership:** The robustness of the LEA-IHE partnership should include a detailed description of its historical development, highlighting key milestones and collaborative efforts that have strengthened the relationship over time. The review will emphasize the importance of providing a comprehensive background on how the partnership has evolved and the significant achievements that have contributed to its strength.
- **Budget Justification:** Include a brief narrative of expenses along with a table of individual cost components that clearly justify the use of funds. Include in the budget all expenses for the project, including the process for awarding student stipends or tuition reimbursement. Identify any co-funding that you are using from other sources and your district approved indirect costs.
- **Recruitment and Retention Reporting:** Applicants will provide annual updates on teacher recruitment and training outcomes and progress on their master plan. Describe how each teacher candidate's progress will be monitored and evaluated at the end of each semester of enrollment. The LEA/ AU will provide an annual report summarizing each participant’s engagement in their preparation programs, challenges associated with ongoing participation, and support offered to the candidates to ensure the successful completion of their educator preparation programs.
- **Support Mechanisms:** Effectiveness of the feedback loop and support plan. Include information explaining how your strategy to address special education teacher shortage will address the target need of hard to staff special education positions in rural communities.
- **Commitment to Teaching:** Assurance of teacher candidates’ commitment to teaching in the LEA after completing and obtaining the required special education endorsement.

See **Appendix A** for the End-of Year Program Report Questions. Education Providers receiving a grant through the Office of Special Education may be selected for a site visit by CDE program staff, during the 2026-2027 school year.

Data Privacy

CDE takes seriously its obligation to protect the privacy of student and educator Personally Identifiable Information (PII) collected, used, shared, and stored. PII will not be collected through the Special Education Teacher Shortage Grant. All program evaluation data will be collected in the aggregate and will be used, shared, and stored in compliance with CDE’s privacy and security policies and procedures.

Note: Documents submitted as part of the application must not contain any personally identifiable student or educator information including names, identification numbers, or anything that could identify an individual. All data should be referenced/included in the aggregate, and the aggregate counts should be redacted to remove small numbers under n=16 for students or n=5 for educators.

Information reported to CDE in relation to grant activities is not confidential and is subject to public request. Awarded grantees should ensure reported information does not contain Personally Identifiable Information (PII) or confidential information.

Application Assistance and Intent to Apply

A recorded application training webinar will be posted on the [Special Education Teacher Shortage Grant](#) webpage no later than March 23rd, 2026.

If interested in applying for this funding opportunity, submit the [Intent to Apply](#) by **Monday, April 27, 2026**. Completing the Intent to Apply is a required component of the application process. Completing the Intent to Apply assists CDE in knowing who needs access to the application in GAINS and providing access guidance, securing enough peer reviewers, and provides an avenue to communicate important updates with potential applicants. Completing the Intent to Apply does not obligate an entity to submit an application for funding.

- The LEA / AU must describe the established partnership with an educator preparation program to support teacher candidates. This includes ongoing mentorship, access to rural-specific professional development, and tailored support services to overcome geographical and financial barriers. The services that support this partnership include:
- Providing teacher stipends / tuition reimbursement grants or other educator talent funding opportunities to recruit and incentivize potential teacher candidates.
- Establishing a binding contract with the special education teacher candidate to work in a hard-to-fill special education position. The plan may include the student's completion of the program, supervision, graduation, Praxis, induction, mentorship, and a 3-year post-graduation commitment. Teacher candidates unable to complete the program may be required to reimburse the district on a prorated basis.
- Conducting a search for a fully qualified teacher and determined that no certified teacher holding the appropriate endorsement was available to staff hard-to-fill special education teacher positions. Evidence verifying that the LEA / AU has attempted to fill positions may include one or more of the following factors:
 - **Geographic Location:** Rural or remote areas struggle to attract qualified personnel.
 - **High Demand:** Regions with a large number of students needing special education services often face a shortage of qualified teachers, resulting in more unfilled positions.
 - **Specialized Skills:** Positions requiring specific expertise, such as working with students with severe disabilities or those needing bilingual special education services, are more difficult to fill.
 - **Work Environment:** Schools with challenging work environments, such as those with high turnover rates or limited resources, find it difficult to retain special education teachers.
 - **Salary and Benefits:** Competitive salaries and benefits are crucial. Positions offering lower compensation compared to other districts struggle to attract teachers.
- Providing supervision and mentorship programs to novice teachers from a fully licensed special educator.
 - Developing a plan to ensure potential teacher candidates will obtain a valid Colorado Teacher Certificate or Temporary Educator Authorization (TEE) before working for the district.

When required, verifying educators have obtained the Special Education Temporary Educator Eligibility authorization (TEE). More details and information can be found on the [Temporary Educator Eligibility \(Initial\) | CDE](#) and [Renew a Temporary Educator Eligibility \(TEE\) Authorization | CDE](#) websites.

Review Process and Notification

Applications will be reviewed by CDE staff and peer reviewers to ensure they contain all required components. Applicants will be notified of final award status no later than **Friday, May 29, 2026**.

Note: This is a competitive process – applicants must score at least 68 points out of the 96 possible narrative points to be approved for funding. Applications that score below 68 points may be asked to submit revisions that would bring the

application to a fundable level. There is no guarantee that applying will result in funding or funding at the requested level. All award decisions are final. Applicants that do not meet the qualifications may reapply for future grant opportunities.

Submission Process and Deadline

Applications must be completed and submitted through [GAINS](#) by **Monday, April 27, 2026, by 4:00 p.m. MST**

Application materials and resources are available on CDE's [Teacher Preparation Partnerships - Colorado Department of Education](#) webpage.

Required Elements

The format outlined below must be followed to ensure consistent application of the evaluation criteria. See Evaluation Rubric for specific selection criteria (pages 16-26).

Part I: Applicant Information and Program Assurances

Part II: Narrative and Budget

Uploads

Special Education Teacher Shortage Grant Application

Intent to Apply Due: Monday April 27, 2026
Applications Due: Monday, May 4, 2026, by 4 pm

Applicants will complete their application in [GAINS](#).
 Applications will be accepted in GAINS from
Monday, March 23, 2026, through Monday, May 4, 2026 at 4:00 p.m. MST

Part I: Applicant Information and Program Assurances

Note that the contact information applicants must provide below is for the purposes of program implementation and is not tied to system roles and permissions within GAINS for the applicant organization.

Application Contact			
The person that CDE should contact if there are any questions or additional information needed for this application.			
Name:		Title:	
Telephone:		E-mail:	
Program Contact			
The person who will be responsible for receiving communications from CDE staff about this program.			
Name:		Title:	
Telephone:		E-mail:	
Authorized Representative Information			
Name:		Title:	
Telephone:		E-mail:	
Fiscal Manager Information			
Name:		Title:	
Telephone:		E-mail:	

Program Assurances

Applicants will agree to the below Assurances within the office of Special Education application in GAINS.
An upload of this document is not required.

The applicant hereby applies for and, if awarded, accepts the state funds requested in this application. In consideration of the receipt of these grant funds, the applicant agrees that the General Assurances form for all state funds and the terms therein are specifically incorporated by reference in this application. The applicant also certifies that all program and pertinent administrative requirements will be met. In addition, grantees that accept funding from the Office of Special Education agree to the following assurances:

- The grantee will annually provide the Colorado Department of Education with the evaluation information required in the End-of-Year Report (**Appendix A**) of the Request for Applications.
- The grantee will work with and provide requested data to CDE within the time frames specified.
- The grantee will not discriminate against anyone regarding race, gender, national origin, color, disability, or age.
- Funds will be used to supplement and not supplant any funds currently being used to provide recruitment activities and services, and grant dollars will be administered by the appropriate fiscal agent.
- Funded projects will maintain appropriate fiscal and program records and fiscal audits of this program will be conducted by the grantees as a part of their regular audits.
- If any findings of misuse of these funds are discovered, project funds will be returned to CDE.
- The grantee will maintain sole responsibility for the project even though subcontractors may be used to perform certain services.
- The Grantee shall work closely and collaboratively with the Department's Program Manager to discuss suggestions or problems as they occur and incorporate suggestions or guidance from the Department while performing the work described within these assurances.
- The Grantee shall coordinate and prioritize all work to ensure that all deliverables and deadlines are met.
- The Grantee shall employ an internal quality control process to ensure that all deliverables are complete, accurate, easy to understand, and of high quality.
- The Grantee shall provide deliverables that, at a minimum, are responsive to the specific requirements, organized into a logical order, contain no spelling or grammatical errors, formatted uniformly, and contain accurate information and correct calculations.
- Grantee shall submit each Deliverable to the Department's Program Manager for review and approval.
- The Grantee shall retain all work papers generated for reference throughout the Program and Program acceptance.
- The Grantee shall participate in the review and revision process, until the Department provides written acceptance of the deliverable.
- The Grantee shall provide copies of any supporting documentation to the Department upon request of the Department and without charge.
- The Grantee shall respond to all telephone calls, voicemails, and e-mail inquiries from the Department within one (1) business day.
- The Grantee shall enable all Grantee staff to exchange documents and electronic files with the Department staff in formats compatible with the Department's systems. The Department currently uses Microsoft Office 365 for PC.

Duplication of Benefits

Federal or State funds generally cannot be used to pay the exact same cost or activity already paid for from another source of funding. This is sometimes referred to as a prohibition on duplication of benefits (DOB), or "double-dipping." Entities using multiple funding sources should be aware of the different authorities and program requirements for each funding source, being careful to avoid DOB in instances where they are paying for similar costs or activities from multiple sources. (2CFR200.302) Subrecipients should avoid duplication of benefits for any federal or state award. A duplication of benefits occurs when the amount of the assistance (i.e., funding) to a beneficiary exceeds the total allowable assistance (i.e., based on the total allocable expenses) to that beneficiary for that purpose.

- Applicant certifies no duplication of benefits resulting in this funding will occur. If awarded, the Awardee (applicant) will notify CDE in writing should this occur.

Fraud, Waste and Abuse

Recipients of grant funds are responsible for taking steps to reduce fraud, waste, and abuse. Fraud Waste and Abuse can come in many forms, such as:

- Embezzlement, bribery, or other public corruption involving federal or state funds;
- Serious mismanagement involving federal or state programs or funds;

- Theft or misuse of Federal student aid to include knowledge of fraud, waste, or abuse involving a financial aid administrator or other entity official(s), or knowledge of fraud, waste, or abuse involving a student loan servicer or collection agency;
- Knowledge that your entity is not complying with regulations or laws involving Federal student aid or other federal or state program or operation requirements;
- Conflicts of interest, violation of arm's length agreements;
- Contract and procurement irregularities;
- Theft or abuse of government property;
- Employee misconduct; or
- Ethics violations by officials.

Entities are required to have a procedure or methodology for timely reporting, in writing, of any noted violations that may potentially affect the federal or state award. (2CFR200.113)

- Applicant certifies there are sufficient internal controls in place to reduce or eliminate the possibility of fraud, waste and abuse with these, or any funds within their agency, and if an instance occurs. If awarded, the Awardee (applicant) will notify CDE in writing.

Conflict of Interest

The applicant hereby certifies that, to the best of its knowledge and belief, there are no present or currently planned interests (financial, contractual, organizational, or otherwise) relating to the work to be performed under the contract or grant resulting from this award that would create any actual or potential conflict of interest (or apparent conflicts of interest) (including conflicts of interest for immediate family members: spouses, parents, children) that would impinge on its ability to render impartial, technically sound, and objective assistance or advice or result in it being given an unfair competitive advantage. In this clause, the term "potential conflict" means reasonably foreseeable conflict of interest. The applicant further certifies that it has and will continue to exercise due diligence in identifying and removing or mitigating, to the Government's or Colorado Department of Education's satisfaction, such conflict of interest (or apparent conflict of interest).

- Applicant certifies there are sufficient internal controls in place to reduce or eliminate the possibility of any conflicts of interest with these, or any funds within their agency. If awarded, the Awardee (applicant) will notify CDE in writing. (2CFR200.112)

The Colorado Department of Education may terminate a grant award upon thirty days' notice if it is deemed by CDE that the applicant is not fulfilling the requirements of the funded program as specified in the approved project application, or if the program is generating less than satisfactory results.

Project modifications and changes to the approved budget must be requested in GAINS and approved by CDE before modifications are made to the expenditures.

Approvals for this grant must be captured in GAINS from the following personnel:

- Applicant Authorized Representative
- Applicant Fiscal Manager

Part II: Narrative and Budget

Responses should be completed in the online application form. Although the system will save your work in progress, applicants may find it useful to compose answers in a separate document and copy them into the form.

For those applicants that have previously received funding from the Special Education Teacher Shortage Grant, the expectation is that the narrative responses will include references to that award, where applicable. For example, discuss how the funds contributed to the program and what still needs to be accomplished. Applicants should demonstrate ongoing and improved capacity in the program and a well-developed plan for sustainability.

Narrative Questions:

Section A: Needs Assessment

1. What is the primary need for this project?
 - o Provide a brief description of the project's needs, goals, and the applicant's historical and current workforce hiring challenges and conditions. Include the amount of funding that is being sought. Finally, briefly mention how the program will be evaluated to measure the success of the programs.
2. What is the current workforce hiring conditions?
 - o The needs assessment should present a concise summary of the applicant's historical and current workforce hiring challenges and conditions.
3. What are the specific objectives of the project to address staffing shortages?
 - o Describe the project objectives to address the staffing shortages of the LEA/AU using data, research, and other measures.
4. How will financial incentives and support be provided to increase the number of qualified special education teachers?
 - o Increase the Number of Qualified Special Education Teachers: By providing financial incentives and support, the program aims to increase the number of teachers with a master's degree and special education endorsement.
5. How will these strategies address current and future staffing shortages?
 - o Strengthen the Educational Workforce: identify how the AU LEA will build a robust pipeline of qualified special education teachers to address current and future staffing shortages.
6. How will the project be implemented?
 - o Describe the project or program and provide information on how it will be implemented, timelines for implementing key activities, what will be accomplished, and the desired outcome to improve outcomes for students with disabilities through a qualified teacher workforce.
7. Identify in-kind matching funds from the LEA/AU, EPP, and other sources that equal 50% or more of the amount of the award from the CDE? (Y/N)
 - o If yes, provide the matching amount. Note: Applicants will not include the match amount in the budget.
 - o If no, application is not eligible for funding

[Not to exceed 1,000 words/6,500 characters with spaces]

Section B: Program Description

1. What strategies will be used to recruit special education teacher candidates to participate in this grant opportunity? Be aware the candidates must be specific to Teachers of Students with Visual Impairment, Teachers of Deaf or Hard of Hearing, Early Childhood Special Educators, or Special Education Generalists.
 - o Detail the strategies for recruiting special education teacher candidates to participate in this grant opportunity. Provide a description of the school district’s plan to offer incentives to attract candidates for hard-to-fill special education teaching positions.
2. What current partnerships exist with local in-state colleges and universities (IHEs) that have a successful history of attracting potential candidates from rural or small rural communities?
 - o Describe the current partnerships with local colleges and universities (IHEs) that have a successful history of attracting potential candidates from rural or small rural communities.
 - o Here is a list of Educator Preparation Programs in Colorado, found in the CDE Educator Talent [Searchable Database](#).
3. What existing mentoring programs will be provided to support teacher candidates in navigating barriers and challenges that threaten the successful completion of their special education endorsement?
 - o Highlight the existing programs or partnerships with IHEs that facilitate and aid teacher candidates in completing their special education training. Identify the existing processes, programs and systems that support teacher candidates with navigating barriers and challenges that threaten the successful completion of their special education endorsement.
4. What is the plan or current process to formalize commitments from teacher candidates to teach in a “hard-to-fill” special education program/classroom for three years after completing certification?
 - o Provide the plan or current process to create a contract with the special education teacher candidates to teach in a “hard-to-fill” special education program/classroom for three (3) years after completing the certification.

[Not to exceed 1,000 words/6,500 characters with spaces]

Section C: Program Goals and Evaluation

1. How will the selection process identify potential special education teacher candidates through university partnerships and outreach efforts, given the grant’s objective to support candidates from bachelor’s degree to master’s degree or to a second master’s degree in area of special education teacher shortage?
 - o The underlying objective of the grant aims to increase the number of qualified special education teachers by supporting candidates from bachelor’s degree to master’s degree or a second master’s degree in an area of special education teacher shortage. Describe the selection process to identify potential special education teacher candidates through university partnerships and outreach efforts.
2. What evidence will be provided to show potential candidates’ commitment to teach in a hard-to-fill special education position for three years of post-certification?
 - o Identify the existing mentoring programs that will be provided to support teacher candidates to navigate barriers and challenges that threaten the successful completion of their special education endorsement. (Suggestion: Highlight the existing programs or partnerships with in-state IHEs that facilitate and aid teacher candidates to successfully complete their special education training).
3. Describe how the district/AU will clarify how the grant will incentivize teachers to pursue their special education teacher certification without incurring long-term and debilitating debt?

[Not to exceed 1,000 words/6,500 characters with spaces]

Section D: Program Budget

Complete your proposed program budget in GAINS. [Provide any budget guidance or links to resources here.]

1. What is the process for teacher candidates to access grant funding for tuition reimbursement and related educational expenses?
 - o Describe the process for teacher candidates to access grant funding for tuition reimbursement and related educational expenses.

2. What is the total amount of matching funds from the LEA, IHE, and other sources to supplement grant funds, and how are these funds distributed?
 - o Include the total amount of matching funds from the LEA, IHE, and other sources to supplement grant funds. Identify how equal measures of in-kind funding are shared by the LEA, the IHE, and other sources to reduce or offset the financial burden on the teacher candidate. In-kind matching funds should equal 50% or more of the grant funds awarded (e.g., \$10,000 CDE award + \$5,000 (50%) matching funds from LEA, IHE, and community partners).
 - o Identify the activities the matching funds will support.

3. How are funds used in accordance with grant objectives and the approved application budget?
 - o Describe how funds are used according to approved application budget expectations and a rationale for how expenditures will be disbursed. Provide a timeline on how funds will be strategically dispersed to decrease the likelihood that teacher candidates will not incur long-term debt.

[Not to exceed 1,00 words/6,500 characters with spaces]

Uploads

- **Include a Letter from the Au/LEA Special Education Supervisor.** Applications for the Special Education Teacher Shortage RFA will be submitted by a district administrator or the special education director.

Evaluation Rubric and Application Scoring

Reviewers will use the following criteria to evaluate the application. For the application to be recommended for funding, it must receive at least 68 points out of the 104 possible narrative points, and all required elements must be addressed. An application that scores below 68 points may be asked to submit revisions that would bring the application up to a fundable level. An application that receives a score of zero on any required elements will not be funded without revisions.

Part II: Narrative and Budget

Section A:	Needs Assessment	/40
Section B:	Program Description	/24
Section C:	Program Goals and Evaluation	/18
Section D:	Program Budget	/18
Priority Area		/4
Total Available:		/104

Section A: Needs Assessment	0 - Applicant did not respond to questions or did not provide necessary information.	2 - Applicant provided some information but did not answer the question in full.	4 - Applicant provided the necessary information, and no clarification is required.	6 - Applicant provided all information in a clear, thorough, and exemplary response.
1. What is the primary need for this project? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a brief description of the project's needs, goals, and the applicant's historical and current workforce hiring challenges and conditions. Include the amount of funding that is being sought. Finally, briefly mention how the program will be evaluated to measure the success of the programs. 	0	2	4	6
2. What are the current workforce hiring conditions? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The needs assessment should present a concise summary of the applicant's historical and current workforce hiring challenges and conditions. 	0	2	4	6

<p>3. What are the specific objectives of the project to address staffing shortages?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the project objectives to address the staffing shortages of the LEA/AU using data, research, and other measures. 	0	2	4	6
<p>4. How will financial incentives and support be provided to increase the number of qualified special education teachers?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe financial incentives and support the program aims to use to increase the number of teachers with a master’s degree and special education endorsement. 	0	2	4	6
<p>5. How will these strategies address current and future staffing shortages?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify how the AU LEA will build a robust pipeline of qualified special education teachers to address current and future staffing shortages. 	0	2	4	6
<p>6. How will the project be implemented?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the project or program and provide information on how it will be implemented, timelines for implementing key activities, what will be 	0	2	4	6

accomplished, and the desired outcome to improve outcomes for students with disabilities through a qualified teacher workforce.					
7. Did the AU/LEA identify in-kind matching funds from the LEA/ AU, EPP and other sources that equal 50% or more of the amount of the award from the CDE? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is an application requirement. If the answer is no, the application will not be accepted. 	0		4		
Total					/40

Section B: Program Description	0 - Applicant did not respond to questions or did not provide necessary information.	2 - Applicant provided some information but did not answer the question in full.	4 - Applicant provided the necessary information, and no clarification is required.	6 - Applicant provided all information in a clear, thorough, and exemplary response.
1. What strategies will be used to recruit special education teacher candidates to participate in this grant opportunity? Be aware the candidates must be specific to Teachers of Students with Visual Impairment, Teachers of Deaf or Hard of Hearing, Early Childhood Special Educators, and/or Special Education Generalists. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detail the strategies for recruiting special education teacher 	0	2	4	6

<p>candidates to participate in this grant opportunity. Provide a description of the school district's plan to offer incentives to attract candidates for hard-to-fill special education teaching positions.</p>				
<p>2. What current partnerships exist with local in-state colleges and universities (IHEs) that have a successful history of attracting potential candidates from rural or small rural communities?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the current partnerships with local colleges and universities (IHEs) that have a successful history of attracting potential candidates from rural or small rural communities. Here is a list of Educator Preparation Programs in Colorado, found in the CDE Educator Talent Searchable Database. 	0	2	4	6
<p>3. What existing mentoring programs will be provided to support teacher candidates in navigating barriers and challenges that threaten the successful completion of their special education endorsement?</p>	0	2	4	6

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlight the existing programs or partnerships with IHEs that facilitate and aid teacher candidates in completing their special education training. Identify the existing processes, programs and systems that support teacher candidates with navigating barriers and challenges that threaten the successful completion of their special education endorsement. 				
<p>4. What is the plan or current process to formalize commitments from teacher candidates to teach in a “hard-to-fill” special education program/classroom / itinerant position for three years after completing certification?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide the plan or current process to create a contract with the special education teacher candidates to teach in a “hard-to-fill” special education program/classroom / itinerant position for three (3) years after completing the certification. 	0	2	4	6
Total	/24			

Section C: Program Goals and Evaluation	0 - Applicant did not respond to questions or did not provide necessary information.	2 - Applicant provided some information but did not answer the question in full.	4 - Applicant provided the necessary information, and no clarification is required.	6 - Applicant provided all information in a clear, thorough, and exemplary response.
<p>1. How will the selection process identify potential special education teacher candidates through university partnerships and outreach efforts, given the grant’s objective to support candidates from bachelor’s degree to master’s degree or a second master’s degree in an area of special education teacher shortage?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The underlying objective of the grant aims to increase the number of qualified special education teachers by supporting candidates from bachelor’s degree to master’s degree or adding a new master’s degree in a special education teacher shortage area. Describe the selection process to identify potential special education teacher candidates through university partnerships and outreach efforts. 	0	2	4	6
<p>2. What evidence will be provided to show potential</p>	0	2	6	6

<p>candidates' commitment to teach in a hard-to-fill special education position for three years of post-certification?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the existing mentoring programs that will be provided to support teacher candidates to navigate barriers and challenges that threaten the successful completion of their special education endorsement. (Suggestion: Highlight the existing programs or partnerships with in-state IHEs that facilitate and aid teacher candidates to successfully complete their special education training). 				
<p>3. Describe how the district/AU will clarify how the grant will incentivize teachers to pursue their special education teacher certification without incurring long-term and debilitating debt?</p>	0	2	4	6
Total				/18

Section D: Program Budget:	0 - Applicant did not respond to questions or did not provide necessary information.	2 - Applicant provided some information but did not answer the question in full.	4 - Applicant provided the necessary information, and no clarification is required.	6 - Applicant provided all information in a clear, thorough, and exemplary response.
<p>1. What is the process for teacher candidates to access grant funding for tuition reimbursement and related educational expenses?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the process for teacher candidates to access grant funding for tuition reimbursement and related educational expenses. 	0	2	4	6
<p>2. What is the total amount of matching funds from the LEA, EPP, and other sources to supplement grant funds, and how are these funds distributed?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include the total amount of matching funds from the LEA, IHE, and other sources to supplement grant funds. Identify how equal measures of in-kind funding are shared by the LEA, the IHE, and other sources to reduce or offset the financial 	0	2	4	6

<p>burden on the teacher candidate. In-kind matching funds should equal 50% or more of the grant funds awarded (e.g., \$10,000 CDE award + \$5,000 (50%) matching funds from LEA, IHE, and community partners).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the activities the matching funds will support. 				
<p>3. How are funds used in accordance with grant objectives and the approved application budget?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe how funds are used according to approved application budget expectations and a rationale for how expenditures will be disbursed. Provide a timeline on how funds will be strategically dispersed to decrease the likelihood that teacher candidates will not incur long-term debt. 	0	2	4	6
Total				/18

Priority Area	0 - Applicant did not respond to questions or did not provide necessary information.	2 - Applicant provided some information but did not answer the question in full.	4 - Applicant provided the necessary information, and no clarification is required.	6 - Applicant provided all information in a clear, thorough, and exemplary response.
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<p>1. Does the applicant represent a rural or small rural LEA/AU Preference will be given to rural* and small rural** LEAs / AUs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● *Rural school districts are located a certain distance from large urban areas and have 6,500 students or less. ● **Small rural districts have fewer than 1,000 students. 	0		4	
Total				/4

Monitoring and Reporting:

Reporting for Special Education Teacher Grant Participation:

Applicants that are awarded funds will be required to participate in monitoring and reporting. Monitoring and reporting activities will be collected during and or after the performance period. No information will be collected at this time.

- a. The applicants shall provide regular updates to the CDE on teacher recruitment and training outcomes. Regular updates can be mid-semester and end of year reports to the CDE.
- b. **Annual Reports:** LEAs will submit annual reports summarizing participation, challenges, and progress of special education teacher candidates. The end of year report shall include cohort members participation and engagement in the teacher preparation program, challenges associated with ongoing participation, as well as progress and supports offered to the candidates to ensure the successful completion of their educator preparation programs.
 - o **Teacher Candidate Progress:** Describe how student progress will be monitored and evaluated.
 - o **Teacher Retention Rates:** Monitoring the retention rates of teachers who received support through the grant.
 - o **Student Outcomes:** Assessing the impact on educational outcomes for students with disabilities.
 - o **Feedback from Participants:** Collecting feedback from teacher candidates and LEAs to identify areas for improvement.
- i. Identify how you will provide evidence that funds (invoices, payment stubs, etc.) were expended consistent with grant expectations.

Appendix A

End-of-Year Performance Report

This end-of-year performance report must be completed before a Request for Funds is processed (1-3 pages).

General Description of Project-
Provide update on status of IHE / Community Partnerships-
Description of Teacher Recruitment Activities in rural communities-
Describe activities and progress of teacher candidates (class schedule, passing grades, transcripts, etc.)
Describe Teacher Mentoring and Induction activities planned for program graduates-
Project Accomplishments-
Budget Requirements- (Ensure that funds are used according to grant objectives and the approved application budget)
Provide and explain evidence of expenditures (invoices, payment stubs, etc.)
End of year submission due by June 15, 2027, in the GAINS portal

Definition of Terms

- Administrative Unit (AU) means a school district, board of cooperative services, multi-district administrative unit, a charter school network, a charter school collaborative, or the State Charter School Institute, that provides educational services to exceptional children and that is responsible for the local administration of these Rules. To qualify as an administrative unit, an entity shall meet all minimum standards established in Section 3.01 of these Rules. All administrative units shall be approved by the Department of Education.
- Hard to Fill Position- A “hard-to-fill” special education teacher assignment typically refers to positions that are challenging to staff due to various factors. These factors can include:
 - **Geographic Location:** Rural or remote areas often struggle to attract qualified special education teachers.
 - **High Demand:** Areas with a high number of students requiring special education services may have more positions than available to qualified teachers.
 - **Specialized Skills:** Positions requiring specific expertise, such as working with students with severe disabilities or those needing bilingual special education services, can be harder to fill.
 - **Work Environment:** Schools with challenging work environments, such as those with high turnover rates or limited resources, may find it difficult to retain special education teachers.
 - **Salary and Benefits:** Competitive salaries and benefits are crucial. Positions offering lower compensation compared to other districts or states may struggle to attract candidates.
- Local Education Agencies-(LEAs)- when used in the Exceptional Children’s Educational Act (ECEA) (34 CFR Part B), the term Local Educational Agency means an administrative unit, as defined above (See Administrative Unit) or a state-operated program as defined in Section 2.49 of the Exceptional Children’s Educational Act.
- Specially Designed Instruction (SDI)- Specially designed instruction is defined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (34 CFR § 300.39 Special Education) as: “... adapting, as appropriate, to the needs of an eligible child under this part, the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction—
 - To address the unique needs of the child that result from the child’s disability; and
 - To ensure access of the child to the general curriculum, so that the child can meet the educational standards within the jurisdiction of the public agency that apply to all children.”

Resources

- Aldeman, C. (2024). [*Where Are All the Special Educators? Schools employ more special education teachers than ever. So why is there a shortage?*](#) *Education Next*, 24(4), 38-43.
- Bettini, E., & Gilmour, A. (2024, September). *Addressing special education staffing shortages: Strategies for schools* (EdResearch for Action Overview Series, Brief No. 31). Boston University; American Institutes for Research. <https://edresearchforaction.org/wp-content/uploads/55015-EdResearch-Special-Education-Staffing-Brief-31-FINAL-1-1.pdf>
- Colorado Department of Education. (2024). *2023–24 educator shortage report*. <https://www.cde.state.co.us/educatortalent/2023-24educatorshortagereport>
- Darling-Hammond, L., Hyler, M. E., & Gardner, M. (2017). *Effective teacher professional development*. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.
- Exceptional Children's Educational Act (ECEA), §§ 22-20-101, et seq., C.R.S., [ECEA RULES](#)
- Harper, J., Gilmour, A. F., & Galea, N. (2022). Trends in the potential supply of new special educators. Advance online publication. *Exceptionality*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09362835.2022.2134867>
- Kraft, M. A., Blazar, D., & Hogan, D. (2018). The effect of teacher coaching on instruction and achievement: A meta-analysis of the causal evidence. *Review of Educational Research*, 88(4), 547–588. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654318759268>
- Papay, J. P., & Kraft, M. A. (2015). Productivity returns to experience in the teacher labor market: Methodological challenges and new evidence on long-term career improvement. *Journal of Public Economics*, 130, 105–119. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2015.02.008>
- Popova, A., Evans, D. K., & Arancibia, V. (2016). *Training teachers on the job*. World Bank.