

**North Dakota Department of Public Instruction Request for Applications (RFA)
Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) Educator Preparation Program
(EPP) and Local Education Agency (LEA) Partnership Grant**

Funding Source: Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) Grant 2024

Maximum Award: \$175,000 per partnership

Number of Awards: Up to four (4)

- Two (2) elementary-level partnerships focused on early and elementary literacy development
- Two (2) secondary-level partnerships focused on adolescent literacy and disciplinary literacy

Project Period: June 2026 – September 2029

Administered by: North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, Office of Academic Support

For questions regarding this RFA, please contact:

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Application Timeline

March 16, 2026	Request for Application Release
March 24, 2026	Informational Webinar. 1:00 pm Webinar Link
April 27, 2026	Application Deadline 11:59:59 pm CDT
June 1-5, 2026	Award Notification
June 8, 2026	Project Start

Purpose of the Grant

The purpose of this grant is to support collaborative partnerships between North Dakota educator preparation programs and North Dakota school districts to strengthen literacy-focused educator development resulting in improved student literacy outcomes.

Projects will address alignment across three stages of educator development:

1. Preservice preparation and student teaching
2. Early career induction (first two years of teaching)
3. Ongoing professional growth beyond initial induction.

Partnerships will design systems and resources that focus on creating and sustaining high-quality instructional environments and systems of support that improve literacy outcomes for all learners, with particular attention to alignment between higher education preparation and K–12 literacy systems.

Expected Outcomes

By the conclusion of the grant period, funded partnerships will:

- Strengthen alignment between EPPs and LEAs around evidence-based literacy instruction
- Increase coherence across literacy-focused teacher preparation, induction, and ongoing support
- Improve educator readiness to implement high-quality, research-based literacy practices
- Produce high-quality, evidence-based resources to support literacy instruction educator preparation statewide
- Contribute to improved educator effectiveness, retention, and literacy outcomes for students across North Dakota

Context

Literacy achievement remains a foundational priority for education systems across North Dakota. Ensuring that educators enter the profession fully prepared to deliver high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction is essential to improving outcomes for all students.

North Dakota school districts continue to experience challenges in ensuring that newly prepared educators enter classrooms fully equipped to implement evidence-based literacy instruction aligned with the science of reading. While educator preparation programs provide strong theoretical foundations, school districts report variability in how teacher candidates translate these principles into practice during student teaching and early career instruction. Likewise, novice educators report misalignment between preparation program content and implementation approaches, and the quality and content of instructional systems, practices, and cooperating teacher preparedness in their student teacher placements.

Several factors contribute to this challenge.

1. Inconsistent alignment between EPP coursework and K–12 literacy systems. Educator preparation programs and school districts may use different instructional frameworks, assessment tools, or instructional practices, making it difficult for candidates to experience coherent literacy instruction during clinical placements.
2. Limited preparation for cooperating teachers. Educators who mentor teacher candidates often receive limited training related to mentoring practices or may be weak in knowledge and/or implementation of evidence-based literacy instruction.
3. Gaps in early career support. New teachers frequently report feeling underprepared for the complexity of literacy instruction, particularly when addressing diverse student needs.
4. Lack of shared systems for evaluating preparation effectiveness. Few structured systems exist to jointly evaluate how well EPPs and LEAs prepare teachers to implement evidence-based literacy instruction.

Research consistently demonstrates that strong partnerships between universities and school districts significantly improve teacher readiness and retention, particularly when clinical practice is closely aligned with coursework and supported by structured mentoring.

Eligibility

Applications must include a partnership between:

Lead Applicant and fiscal agent. A Local Education Agency (LEA) listed on the ND CLIMBS List of [Eligible Entities](#) and an accredited Educator Preparation Program (EPP) at a North Dakota institution of higher education.

Applications must demonstrate:

- Joint development of the project
- Shared leadership and decision-making
- Clearly defined roles and responsibilities
- Participation of district staff, university faculty, teacher candidates, and practitioners

Project Focus Areas

Applicants must select one focus area.

Elementary Literacy (PK–5) projects should focus on strengthening alignment of educator preparation and support for early and elementary literacy instruction.

Secondary Literacy (6–12) projects should focus on strengthening alignment of educator preparation for English Language Arts instruction and intervention and disciplinary literacy across content areas.

Required Project Components

Funded partnerships must co-design a three-year project that strengthens alignment between EPPs and LEAs, including

- **System Evaluation and Refinement**
Projects must develop approaches to evaluate, refine and align student teacher practice experiences addressing both the effectiveness of EPP processes in preparing teacher candidates to implement evidence-based literacy instruction, and the effectiveness of the LEAs instructional systems and cooperating teacher's preparation to provide a high-quality practical experience.
- **Early Career Teacher Support**
Projects must develop structures to support teachers during their first two years of employment, which may include mentorship models, literacy-focused coaching, professional learning communities, and induction support aligned with evidence-based literacy instruction.
- **Continuous Collaboration**
Partnerships must establish systems that support ongoing collaboration between EPP faculty, district literacy leaders, practicing teachers and instructional coaches.
- **Final Deliverable: Statewide Resource**
Each partnership must produce a resource or toolkit designed for statewide use. The final resource must be grounded in evidence-based literacy practices aligning with science of reading principles, providing practical implementation guidance, and be adaptable for use across North Dakota districts and educator preparation programs

Allowable Uses of Funds

Grant funds may support evidence-based activities that directly support project goals, including:

- Partnership planning and coordination
- Professional learning activities
- Resource development and piloting
- Evaluation and continuous improvement activities

All expenditures must comply with ND CLSD funding guidelines.

Requirements

Grant recipients must:

- Submit quarterly reimbursement claims
- Submit annual progress reports
- Ensure expenditures comply with federal supplement not supplant requirements
- Submit a final project report and statewide resource(s)

Application Components

Applicants must submit the following:

- Completed application form
- Grant narrative (maximum 20 pages)
- Proposed budget
- Budget narrative
- Letters of commitment from LEA and EPP partners

Grant Narrative Requirements

The narrative must not be more than 20 pages, double spaced.

Part I – Project Need

Describe:

- The need for the project
- Local and statewide literacy context

Part II – Project Design and Management

Describe:

- Partnership structure, leadership roles and management plan
- Project description, goals and expected outcomes
- Timeline of activities with milestones
- Alignment with evidence-based literacy practices
- Statewide impact, deliverables and scalability
- Evaluation and continuous improvement plan

Part III – Budget

Include:

- Proposed budget
- Budget narrative explaining expenditure alignment to project goals and activities.

District and EPP Letters of Commitment (2)

Each partner must submit one letter of commitment from the appropriate authorized representative expressing interest in the grant, acknowledging that it requires a three-year partnership commitment from the entity.

Proposal Scoring

Applications will be scored using the following criteria up to 100 total points.

Need (10 Points)

- Identifies the need for improved alignment between EPP and LEA literacy preparation systems.
- A strong application provides a compelling, data-informed description of the need for stronger alignment between EPP and LEA literacy preparation. Demonstrates understanding of challenges in preparing educators to deliver evidence-based literacy instruction.

Local District and Educator Preparation Program Partnership (20 Points)

- Describes the collaboration between the educator preparation program and local education agency.
- A strong application demonstrates a strong, well-developed partnership with shared leadership, clearly defined roles, and meaningful participation from faculty, district staff, and practitioners. Includes evidence of ongoing collaboration and commitment

Alignment to Evidence-Based Literacy Practices (Science of Reading) (20 Points)

- Describes how the project aligns with research-based literacy instruction and CLSD priorities.
- A strong application demonstrates strong alignment with evidence-based literacy practices and clearly connects activities to research-supported instruction consistent with CLSD goals.

Project Design and Implementation Plan (20 Points)

- Clearly describes the design and implementation of the project plan.
- A strong plan provides a clear, well-structured three-year implementation plan with milestones addressing preparation, launch, and maintenance phases. Activities are logical, feasible, and aligned to grant goals.

Evaluation Plan (10 Points)

- Provides a plan to assess the effectiveness of EPP and LEA processes. Provides measurable outcomes.
- Includes a clear, collaborative evaluation plan that examines both EPP and LEA processes. Provides measurable outcomes. (9-10)

Describes the Proposed Statewide Resources (15 Points)

- Proposes useful and scalable resource products with benefits for ND institutions and districts beyond the immediate partnership.
- Proposed resources are clearly defined, practical, and demonstrate potential for statewide impact and adoption by other EPPs and LEAs.

Budget and Resource Alignment to Project (5 Points)

- Budget is reasonable and aligned with project goals and activities.
- Budget is clear, reasonable, and strongly aligned with proposed activities. (5)