

Licensure Pathways Enhancement Curriculum Development Grant

Notice of Funding Opportunity

State Agency Name: Iowa Department of Education

Funding Opportunity Title: Licensure Pathways Enhancement Curriculum Development Grant

Announcement Type: Initial

CFDA Number: 84.323A

Important Dates

Deadline

Applications for Licensure Pathways Enhancement Curriculum Development Grant Funds are due by **Wednesday, Oct. 28, 2026, at 3:00 p.m.**

Application Notification

A Notice of Intent to Award will be posted on the following websites:

- [IowaGrants](#)
- [Iowa Department of Education: Iowa GROWS](#)

Technical Assistance

The Iowa Department of Education (Department) will host an initial webinar to provide information and an opportunity for a live Q&A **on Tuesday, Sept. 22 at Noon and again at 3:00 p.m.** [Join via Zoom](#). Webinars, recordings, and additional Technical Assistance will be posted on the Department's Iowa GROWS webpage.

1. Program Description

Iowa faces a persistent and well-documented special education teacher shortage that threatens the educational outcomes of thousands of students with disabilities. During the 2025-2026 school year, Iowa granted 478 conditional licenses in special education endorsement areas.

Iowa GROWS is a strategic initiative to transform Iowa's special education workforce by creating accessible career pathways that produce 100 special education apprentices (80 newly licensed; 20 positioned for licensure) and establishing 60 state-owned, evidence-based professional development courses to strengthen the skills of every educator serving students with disabilities by the end of the grant period.

The Licensure Pathways Enhancement (LPE) provides structured support to participating Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) to strengthen special education registered apprenticeship pathways. During Year One, Iowa GROWS will award LPE grants to IHE partners to support the revision, development, design, pilot, and implementation of special education licensure coursework aligned with Iowa Administrative Code 281 Chapter 79 and Administrative Code 282 Chapter 14 requirements in addition to the related instruction and on-the-job training components of the Registered Teacher Apprenticeship model.

Notice Purpose

The purpose of this Notice of Funding Opportunity is to solicit applications from Iowa Educator Preparation Programs for Licensure Pathway Enhancement Curriculum Development Grants.

Models

The Department seeks applications for funding both of the following LPE Curriculum Development Grants

Table 1. LPE Curriculum Development Grant

Description	Existing Course	New Course
Eligible Applicants	Iowa IHEs with existing or intent to develop an apprentice pathway to Special Education licensure	Iowa IHEs with existing or intent to develop an apprentice pathway to Special Education licensure
Development Deadline	June 30, 2027	June 30, 2027
Activity	Revise, update, or enhance an existing three-credit special education course that would be required in an apprenticeship pathway leading to licensure	Develop, design, and pilot a three-credit special education course that would be required in an apprenticeship pathway leading to licensure
Funding Limitations	Up to \$10,000 per course	Up to \$15,000 per course
Covered Costs	• Faculty stipends • Administrative stipend to complete sponsor registration with Iowa Office of Apprenticeship • Content references and resources • Instructional design support	• Faculty stipends • Administrative stipend to complete sponsor registration with Iowa Office of Apprenticeship • Content references and resources • Instructional design support • Pilot participant stipend

2. Funding Priorities

The Department seeks applications that emphasize the following funding priorities:

1. Clearly defined curriculum development objectives and intended outcomes
2. Demonstrates the significance of the proposed course revision or development to strengthen knowledge, skills, and competencies required for special education licensure
3. Evidence of need for the development, enhancement, or revision of the course
4. Alignment of faculty experience and expertise relevant to special education content, pedagogy, and curriculum development
5. Demonstration of strong institutional support for a special education apprentice pathway and designated coursework
6. Cultivate partnerships with school districts as employers and OJT providers to address local and/or regional teacher and paraeducator employment needs.

7. Support regional connections between school districts and teacher preparation programs across the state to expand teacher registered apprenticeship opportunities with commitment to seek candidates for tuition grant support

3. Performance Measures

All applications must include performance measures that logically connect a project's goal(s) with proposed activities. Performance measures should include to the extent possible whether the expected results were achieved. The following performance measures are required as part of the grant:

1. Application of the Quality Control Rubric (QCR) with a score of 80% or above (see Appendix C)
2. For a newly developed course, completion of the Rapid-cycle pilot (see Appendix D)
3. Intent and strategy to meet the reporting requirements
4. Description of the plan and ability to track completion of the performance measures

4. Program Authority

The Department's authority to award these grants is found at Iowa Code section 281-7.1(256,17A).

5. Definitions

Apprentice: A person employed in a program who is provided combined classroom and on-the-job training under the direct and close supervision of a highly skilled worker in an occupation recognized as an apprenticeable trade and registered by the United States Department of Labor's Office of Apprenticeship and meeting the standards established by that office.

On-the-job learning (OJL): A workforce development strategy where employers of all sizes have an opportunity to train, mentor, and hire candidates as they become fully proficient in a particular skill set or job function.

Paraeducator: An employee who works alongside and under the supervision of a licensed or certificated educator to support and assist in providing instructional and other services to children, youth, and their families.

Related training instruction (RTI): The classroom and/or lab learning experiences of registered apprentices. Hours spent in the classroom are designed to complement the OJT component of apprenticeships and enhance the learning experience.

6. Award Information

Estimated Funds Available

The Department has appropriated \$300,000 of State Profession Development Grant funds for Licensure Pathway Enhancement curriculum development subgrants.

Estimated Award Amount

The Department is providing up to \$10,000 for the redesign or revision of an existing 3 credit hour course required for RTI in a teacher apprentice pathway leading to special education licensure. The Department is providing up to \$15,000 for the development and piloting of a new 3 credit hour course required for RTI in a teacher apprentice pathway leading to special education licensure.

Program Award Period

Awardees are required to seek reimbursement of funds by June 30, 2027. Any unexpended grant dollars must be returned to the Department thereafter.

The recipient must provide detailed progress reports to the Department by Jan. 31, 2027 and April 30, 2027 in IowaWORKS for any incomplete subgrant work.

Use of Funds

Grant funds must be used to compensate faculty through stipends, purchase of content references and resources to be used in the course, and any necessary instructional design support.

Reporting Requirements

Each awardee must submit a report to document the use of funds. This will certify funds were used in accordance with the grant application and grant program. All grantees must provide a detailed report of the use of funds prior to approval of reimbursement requests.

Payment Schedule

The executed grant agreement will specify conditions for reimbursement.

7. Eligibility Information

Eligible applicants include Iowa institutions of higher education educator preparation programs accredited by an agency approved to do so by the U.S. Department of Education, approved by the Iowa State Board of Education.

Grantees must comply with all applicable provisions of state and federal laws pertaining to nondiscrimination, sexual harassment, and equal employment opportunity.

8. Application and Submission Information

Applicants must submit applications electronically via IowaGrants.gov. The Department recommends applicants create an account and begin the application in advance of the deadline. For registration technical assistance, refer to Appendix B.

The applicant's authorized representative must be the person who submits the application. The authorized representative must be using their own IowaGrants.gov account to sign in and submit the application.

Official email communication from the Department regarding this application will be issued from iowa.grants@webgrantsmail.com. Applicants are required to ensure these communications are received and responded to accordingly.

9. Application Content

General Information

- General information – cover sheet.
- Institutional information.
- Description of the institution's apprentice pathway to special education licensure.

Project Description

Summary of the intended actions the institution will take to revise, update, or develop special education coursework required for an apprentice pathway to licensure. The narrative should clearly identify measurable curriculum development objectives that directly address the knowledge, skills, and competencies needed by a special education teacher in an apprenticeship program. Provide a rationale for how the revision or development strengthens preparation and evidence of the need for this work.

Work Plan

Detailed timeline to complete the course revision, update, or creation. If proposing multiple courses, provide a work plan for each one.

Budget Summary and Budget Narrative

A detailed description of the proposed budget.

Faculty Qualifications

Provide faculty assignments for each proposed course revision, update, or development with justification for the experience and expertise for their qualification to execute the work. Curriculum Vitae must be submitted.

Performance Measures

The following performance measures are required as part of the grant. Clearly identify any additional outcomes relevant to the project.

- Application of the quality course rubric - must achieve 80% or higher (see Appendix C)
- For newly developed coursework - application of the rapid-cycle improvement and pilot process (see Appendix D)
- Intent and strategy to meet the reporting requirements
- Describe institution's plan and ability to track and document the performance measures

Organization Capability Narrative

- The ability of the institution to support and complete the proposed work. Please address faculty capacity, resources, systems, and processes in place to complete the proposed work.
- Letter of support from an Administrator that oversees the educator preparation program and/or an Institution Administrator.

Iowa Community School District Partnerships

- Describe existing or intended school district partnerships that will lead to enrollment of candidates in an apprentice pathway leading to special education licensure.
- If partnerships are already established - a letter of support from CSD Administrator or Superintendent

Application Attachments

Please provide any relevant attachments

Authorization, Assurances and Certification

See Appendix A for further instructions and application technical assistance.

10. Submission Dates and Time

Please see the Important Dates section at the beginning of this announcement for the submission deadline. The Department reserves the right to extend the submission deadline, and any notice of such extension will be posted on the Department website and IowaGrants.gov.

Attempted submission of a completed application after the stated due date and time will not be allowed by the system. If a submission is attempted after the published date and time, the applicant will receive a notice stating that the funding opportunity is closed.

11. Application Review Information

Table 2. Review Criteria

Section	Points
Project Description	30 Points
Work Plan	20 Points
Budget Summary and Narrative	10 Points
Faculty Qualifications	20 Points
Performance Measures	10 Points
Organization Capability	5 Points
Partnerships	5 Points
Total	100 Points

Review and Selection Process

A review team will use the criteria listed in this section to review applications under this funding announcement.

Applicant Clarification

Some applicants may receive requests to provide clarifying information and/or make changes to their application, including the budget. This information is used by Department staff in making funding recommendations. Applications may be recommended for funding even if they are not asked clarification questions. A request for clarification does not guarantee a grant award. Failure to respond to requests adequately and in a timely manner may result in the removal of applications from consideration.

Selection for Funding

Decisions to award grants and the funding levels will be determined per application based upon compliance with the requirements of this funding announcement. Applicants may be selected to enter into a grant agreement, finalizing grant terms, budget, scope-of-work provisions, and at which time the final decision to make a grant award will be made. Submission of an application is not a guarantee of an award.

12. Contacts

Please direct any questions regarding this notice of funding opportunity to:

Amy Mayer
Program Consultant, Project Coordinator
Iowa Department of Education
amy.mayer@iowa.gov
515-238-9148

13. Other Information

1. If an applicant fails to meet any eligibility criterion at the time of an application deadline, the application may still be reviewed, but the state will not make an award until all eligibility criteria are met.
2. The Department reserves the right to require additional information from applicants to evaluate applications.
3. The Department, at its sole discretion, reserves the right to reject all applications; to reject individual applications for failure to meet any requirement; to award in part or total and to waive minor defects and noncompliance. Such a waiver will not modify the program requirements or excuse the applicant from full compliance with program specifications or grant agreement requirements if the grant is awarded. Submission of an application confers no right to an award or to a subsequent grant agreement.
4. All application submissions become the property of the Department. If funds are awarded, the contents of all applications will be in the public domain at the conclusion of the selection process and will be open to inspection by interested parties subject to expectations provided in Iowa Code Chapter 22 or other provisions of law.
5. The Department is not obligated to award any grants under this program, to pay any costs incurred by the applicant in the preparation and submission of an application or to pay any grant-related costs incurred prior to the grant beginning date.
6. All decisions by the Department are final
7. Upon Department approval, the successful applicant will receive a grant agreement via email. The applicant has 10 working days to sign the grant agreement. If the agreement is not executed within 10 working days, the Department reserves the right to cancel the award. The Department, at its sole discretion, may extend the time for executing the grant agreement.
8. Any grant agreement awarded by the Department shall include specific provisions, terms and conditions.
9. The scoring committee will include members from the Department's Teacher Quality and Innovations and Special Education Divisions.

14. Appeal of Grant Denial or Termination

An applicant may appeal the denial of a properly submitted competitive program grant application or the unilateral termination of a competitive program grant to the director of the department.

1. Appeals are to be:
 - a. In writing,
 - b. Received within ten working days of the date of the notice of decision, and
 - c. Based on a contention that the process was conducted outside of statutory authority, violated state or federal law, policy, or rule; did not provide adequate public notice; was altered without adequate public notice; or involved conflict of interest by staff or committee members.
2. The hear and appeal procedures found in Chapter 7 that govern the director's decisions apply to any appeal of denial or termination.

3. In the notice of appeal, the grantee will give a short and plain statement of the reasons for the appeal.
4. The director will issue a decision within a reasonable time, not to exceed 60 days from the date of the hearing.

Appendix A

Please review the following information when preparing your grant application in IowaGrants.gov. The application gathers general information, narratives, budget information, and attachments. Each section includes prompts that must be addressed.

General Information

Complete Cover Sheet - General Information. On this form applicants will enter basic information about their organization, including:

- Contact information for the institution's authorized representative
- Contact information for the institution's fiscal officer or agent
- Complete program information
 - Legal organization name
 - Organization type
 - Business address
 - Contact information of a person for program coordination
 - Funding amount requested

Appendix B

Applicants new to IowaGrants.gov should follow these basic instructions to create an account and begin the grant application.

1. Go to www.iowagrants.gov.
2. Click "New Users Register Here."
3. Enter your first and last name.
4. Choose an Account ID name. Please note this will be your user ID in the system.
5. Click "Save Account Details." You may receive a pop-up message that asks if you want to continue with your registration. Click "OK."
6. Next, you'll receive a confirmation email.
7. Open the confirmation email and follow the instructions. You will:
8. Click a confirmation link;
9. Choose security questions; and
10. Confirm a password.
11. Go to www.iowagrants.gov and into your account with your new username and password to finish activation.
12. Enter your basic information and select your Program Area of Interest
13. Click Register.

14. Your registration is now pending final system approval. You will receive a confirmation email once approval is complete.

Appendix C

The Department will use an internally developed Quality Course Rubric (QCR) grounded in two nationally recognized frameworks:

1. The National Standards for Quality Online Courses, Fourth Edition (2025), which evaluates course design across seven standards: Course Overview and Support, Content, Instructional Design, Learner Assessment, Accessibility and Usability, Course Technology, and Course Evaluation
2. The Council for Exceptional Children's (CEC) High-Leverage Practices (Council for Exceptional Children & Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability, and Reform (CEEDAR) Center)

Every course will be reviewed using the QCR and must receive a score of 80% or higher.

Appendix D

In addition to passing the QCR, each newly developed course must undergo a rapid-cycle pilot before release. The rapid-cycle pilot is a structured, four-step process grounded in improvement science:

Step1: Draft and Review

The course is developed and reviewed against the quality republic ensuring alignment to both the NSQ Online Courses standards and CEC High-Leverage Practices before any external review.

Step 2: Pilot

The course is delivered to a cohort of 5-8 educators drawn from Iowa's IHE partners and participating school districts who complete the course within a defined pilot window of approximately 4-6 weeks.

Step 3: Collect and Analyze Feedback

Structured feedback is gathered from pilot participants on course content, usability and perceived effectiveness. The institution analyzes this feedback to identify specific revisions.

Step 4: Revised and Release

The course is revised based on pilot findings.