

**WORK FIRST BLOCK GRANT ELECTING COUNTY PLAN
SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS
FEDERAL FISCAL YEARS 2023- 2026**

I. Format Requirements

The county plan must be formatted according to the following guidelines:

- 12-point Arial font.
- Single spacing for sections containing narrative or bulleted text.
- One-inch margins on all sides.
- Submit 1 electronic copy of the complete plan. The electronic version must be one complete document. Do not separate the title page, the table of contents, etc. from the plan and do not submit these documents separately. Create one county plan document for electronic submission.
- County Plans should be named using the following format: county name and plan period (ex. Alamance County 2023-2026 plan).
- Page numbers on every page, at the top, including figures, attachments, etc.
- Include a cover sheet that has the county’s name, contact person’s name, mailing address, telephone number, fax number and email address.
- Table of contents with page numbers.

II. Plan Submission

Submit Microsoft Word document to Work.First.Policy.Team@dhhs.nc.gov.

III. Websites with information to assist with the county planning process

https://www.nc.gov/agency/workforce-solutions-division	NC Division of Workforce Solutions
https://www.osbm.nc.gov/facts-figures/state-data-center	State Data Center
http://www.ncleg.net/gascripts/Statutes/StatutesTOC.pl	N.C. General Statutes
https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/social-services/public-notices	State TANF Plan
http://www.census.gov/	U.S. Census Bureau – Homepage
https://www.census.gov/data.html	U.S. Census Bureau – Statistics

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Work First plans must include policies and practices on compliance with the American with Disabilities Act (ADA), as well as the provision of interpreter services for its citizens that require such accommodations. Provide a detailed discussion on how the county complies with the ADA and the request for interpreter services. Furthermore, the county plans should include the following:

I. Conditions within the County

Briefly describe the current realities for low-income families in the county and key issues addressed by the plan. What are the most pressing problems? In addition to the narrative, provide relevant supporting documentation. Include current and projected economic trends such as new businesses, plant closings, and job availability. In this section, **do not** include raw data, instead, include analysis and cite the sources. **(2 page maximum)**

II. Planning Process

A. Planning Committee

List the members of the local planning committee. Include names and affiliations. Membership of the committee must include, but is not limited to, representatives of the:

1. County Board of Social Services
2. Division of Workforce Solutions (DWS) (NCWorks Career Centers)
3. Workforce Innovative Opportunity Act (WIOA)
4. Local Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
5. Head Start Agency
6. Local Management Entity – Managed Care Organization (LME - MCO)
7. Local Public Health Department
8. Local School System(s)
9. Business Community
10. Board of County Commissioners
11. Community-based Organizations that are Representative of the Population to be Served
12. Childcare Service Providers
13. Local departments/agencies of Social Services staff to include but not limited to: Child Support Services, Food and Nutrition Services, Children Services, Medicaid, Childcare, etc.
14. Transportation Service Providers

In addition, it is highly recommended that you include representatives of:

15. Faith Based Organizations
16. Recipients of Work First and other Types of Assistance and Services
17. Other Community Advocacy Agencies

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B. Public Comment

Each county plan must include documentation of the public comment process. Describe when and how public comments were received, the length of the comment period, and how the public was notified of the opportunity to comment.

C. Planning Development

Describe the collaboration that led to the plan's development. Also, include the proposed process for continued collaboration and coordination to carry out the plan. Include a discussion of the committee appointed by the county board of commissioners to identify the needs of the population to be served. How did this committee contribute to the review and development of the county block grant plan to respond to the identified needs? How were other public comments obtained and processed?

III. Goals and Performance Measures

A. Statewide Work First Goals

There are two goals for North Carolina's Work First Program. North Carolina General Statute (N.C.G.S. § 108A-27.14(c), State Law, requires an Electing County to achieve its Work First Program Goals. If a county fails for two consecutive years to meet its Work First Program goals, or fails to comply with a corrective action plan developed pursuant to this section, and as a result the federal government imposes a penalty upon the State, then the county shall lose its Electing County status.

Please describe how your county will ensure the goals listed below are met when the Work First Participation Rate Reports are available to counties.

1. Meeting Federal Work Participation Rates for All Families. Active participation in employment services and activities will lead to full time employment. Counties must ensure that at least 50% of all Work Eligible Individuals, as defined by Federal Rule, complete the required number of hours of federally countable work activities.
2. Meeting Federal Work Participation Rates for Two-Parent Families. Active participation in employment services and activities will lead to full time employment. Counties must ensure that at least 90% of all two-parent families with Work Eligible Individuals, as defined by Federal Rule, complete the required number of hours of federally countable work activities.

B. County Performance Measures

Electing Counties: County boards of commissioners are responsible for establishing county outcomes for performance measures (N.C.G.S. §108A-27.3). For Electing Counties, describe how the county will document the progress toward the measures listed below:

1. Employment. Self-sufficiency will be realized primarily through the employment of Work First participants.
2. Meeting Federal Participation Rates. Active participation in federal countable work activities will lead to full time employment. **All counties will need to provide their work participation rates for the 12 calendar months prior to the month of submission of the new county plan (once Work First Participation Rate Reports are available to counties).**

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3. Providing Employment Services. Active participation in intensive employment services for all families is necessary to meet the participation rate and to ensure families are served adequately before the end of five years. One measure of success in Work First is the percentage of families who are subject to the work requirement that counties are assisting with job preparation and job placement.
4. Staying Off Work First Cash Assistance. Efforts to reduce Work First Cash Assistance rolls, help adults find jobs, and increase self-sufficiency are undermined when families return to assistance. Families leaving Work First because of a job are tracked to determine if they return to cash assistance.
5. Job Retention. Families who leave Work First for employment and continue to be employed 6 to 12 months after leaving the program show evidence of keeping their income and increased job stability, which impacts a family's well-being. This measure will be based on the number of responsible adults that leave Work First Family Assistance for employment who are still employed at 6 and 12 month intervals following termination.
6. Benefit Diversion. The most successful outcome possible for an applicant of public assistance is to avoid the need to become a recipient. This is also recognized in the federal law, which specifies diversion from public assistance as a desired outcome. Use of Work First Benefit Diversion Assistance for a specified percentage or number of Work First applications is a performance measure for each county.

IV. Plans to Achieve the Outcomes and Goals

A. Activities

Describe the activities that will be available to participants to enable the program to meet the goals listed above. What agencies or organizations in the community will provide these activities, and where will they take place? Include both public and private resources. How will these activities contribute to meeting the goals? If the county will operate a work supplementation program, describe the program. **All counties must provide documentation of their strategies for meeting their work participation rate while ensuring that family-centered services are provided to Work First applicants and recipients.**

B. Supportive Services

Describe the supportive services that will enable individuals to participate in the activities described above. What services will be provided? Who will carry them out? Where will they take place?

V. Administration

A. Authority

Will authority for administration of the Work First Program be delegated to an entity or agency other than the board of county commissioners for Electing Counties? If so, name and describe that entity or agency. (Notwithstanding any delegation of duty, the county board of commissioners shall remain accountable for its duties under the Work First Program.)

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B. Organization

Describe the agency's organization for the functions listed below. Describe any collaborative arrangements (such as co-location of staff) counties have with other agencies, such as DWS (NCWorks Career Centers), VR, WIOA, etc. to include the below:

1. Eligibility Determination
2. Emergency Assistance
3. Employment Services
 4. Formal Assessments (employment and functional)
 5. Intake
 6. Other supportive services

Are counties consolidating program functions such as employment services and eligibility caseworkers?

C. Child Care

Describe how the county will prioritize its subsidized childcare services.

D. Transportation

Describe in detail how the transportation needs of Work First participants will be met through local coordination and collaboration. What arrangements does the county have with the local public and private transportation system? What private transportation resources have the county developed? Will the agency continue to support the transportation retention services? Give an estimate of the amount of funds from the Work First Block Grant that will be allocated for transportation services and any other funds received.

E. Substance Use/Mental Health

Describe in detail the collaboration with the LME - MCO, developmental disabilities, and substance use services to provide assessments and treatment.

Include a copy of the local Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the LME - MCO.

F. Family Violence Option

Describe the arrangements for providing Family Violence Option waivers (See Work First Manual Section 104D) and the plans for coordinating with domestic violence service agencies in the area to provide services to victims of domestic violence.

Include a copy of the local Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Domestic Violence Agency

G. Other Services

Include a copy of the local Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), contract, or protocol for collaboration, etc. with the below agencies:

- Division of Workforce Solutions - NCWorks Career Centers
- Vocational Rehabilitation

H. Maintenance of Effort (MOE)

List the activities, staff, and services that will be funded using (MOE) funds. **Each county will spend MOE funds timely throughout the year to avoid last minute MOE expenditures. Counties that fail to meet its MOE may be subject to a program improvement plan (N.C.G.S. § 108A-27.9). Further, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NC DHHS) – Division of Social Services (DSS) may**

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use the county's block grant to secure needed services for families in that county or reduce block grant allocations to counties that fail to meet MOE requirements.

I. Child Welfare Services

Give an estimate of how much of the Work First Block Grant the county will devote to Child Welfare Services.

VI. Emergency Assistance

Describe the Emergency Assistance policies and procedures. For requirements, see Work First Manual Section 003. **Each county must list the amount of the Work First Block declared for Emergency Assistance.**

VII. Services to Low Income Families (under 200% of federal poverty level)

As a reminder, providing 200% services is not optional. Describe the policies and procedures for these services, as discussed in Work First Manual Section 003. **Counties must list the amount of the Work First Block declared for low income families under 200% of the poverty level threshold.**

VIII. Services to Non-Custodial Parents (optional)

Describe the policies and procedures for these services, as discussed in Work First Manual Section 003. **If the county chooses not to provide these optional services, include a statement to that effect.**

IX. Exemption from the Work Requirement

Describe the county policy regarding exempting single custodial parents of children under age one from the work requirement. See Work First Manual Section 003. If the county does not specify a policy in the county's plan, the county will follow Standard County policy.

X. Innovative County Strategies

Describe activities or initiatives in the county that are innovative in meeting the goals of the Work First Program. These activities or initiatives may have already been described elsewhere in the plan; however, this is a place to showcase the innovations.

For example: Does the county have an innovative way to address domestic violence or literacy issues? What approach does the county find successful in working with long-term recipient families? What is the strategy for serving adults with disabilities? **(1 page maximum)**

XI. Special Issues

Describe any special issues or conditions in the county that could affect the operation of the Work First Program.

XII. Eligibility Criteria

See Work First Manual Section 003. for the limitations that federal and state law place on eligibility criteria.

Describe in detail the eligibility criteria that will be used in the county. Include all terms

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and conditions for receiving Work First Program assistance and services, including, at a minimum:

- Definition of relationships;
- Who can apply/be included in the payment;
- Payment levels (EA, 200% services, child welfare);
- Countable income;
- Sanctions;
- Resource requirements (limit and countable items);
- Time limits and extensions;
- Exemptions, and exceptions to requirements;
- Benefit Diversion requirements;
- Reward incentives

If counties plan to follow the **state's standard policy** for any of these items, include a statement to that effect in the appropriate section(s).

If there is any change to eligibility that would exclude individuals currently eligible, please explain.

If counties propose to change eligibility requirements or benefit levels, describe the reasons for these changes.

Attach a copy of a sample Mutual Responsibility Agreement/Outcome Plan to be used in the county.

XIII. Appeals Process

The Board of County Commissioners is ultimately responsible for this process but may delegate it to another entity as provided for in this section of the plan. Describe the counties' appeals process. The appeal process must substantially comply with N.C.G.S. §108A-79. Second level appeal hearings must be held in the county rather than by the Department of Health and Human Services.

XIV. Review Prior to Expiration of Time Limits

State Law [N.C.G.S. §108A-27.4(e)(7)] requires Electing county plans to include the process by which the county will review all Work First caseloads no later than three months prior to expiration of time limitations for receiving cash assistance. See Work First Policy Section 105.

XV. Funding Requirements

Estimate the amount of the county block grant that the county will spend for Benefit Diversion, Work First Family Assistance, Work First Services, and the Maintenance of Effort contribution.

XVI. Certification

The County Block Grant Plan must include certification, signed by the Chairman, that it was approved by the County Board of Commissioners.