



## **English Language Learner (ELL) Healthcare Pathways Round Three (FY 2026-29) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**

### **English Language Learner (ELL) Healthcare Pathways Round Three (FY 2026-29) Request for Application (RFA)**

#### **DEFINITIONS QUESTIONS**

- 1. Within the application, does the term "region" mean the consortium's service area, or is it a reference to the eight statewide regions defined by the Chancellor's Office?**

The term "region" refers to a geographical area that best supports the Center serving the needs of area ELL students and partners in Healthcare Pathway Programs. It does not refer to the specific California Adult Education Program (CAEP) micro-regions or to the community college regions, although a Center may certainly be planned and developed to serve a designated region of this type.

- 2. Can you clarify what is meant by “hub of specialization” in the description of the Centers for Innovation and Impact in Health Careers?**

The term "Hubs of specialization and expertise" describes a Center as a repository of knowledge, expertise, and shared information related to ELL health career pathways. This includes but is not limited to program and curriculum planning and development, data capture and analysis, instructional models, up-to-date understanding of credentialing, support for employer needs, expertise in workforce development, and the development of shared tools, frameworks and curricula. In this role, a Center could serve its immediate consortium, or a broader geographical area. See p. 7 of the RFA.

**3. Is the Center required to be a physical location, or can it be a conceptual center, such as a collaborative think tank, Community of Practice (COP), etc.?**

The Center is not required to be a physical center, but it may be if that is part of the applicant's innovative proposal. Centers should be sustainable after ELL Healthcare Pathways funding ends.

A Center is an organizational hub of expertise for collaborative partners that provides expertise and innovation in one or more Health Career pathways in its area. Note that the RFA states that applicants are expected to both "Lead a local or regional community (or communities) of practice," and "participate in statewide Communities of Practice led by the ELL Healthcare Vocational Pathways Technical Assistance Providers." See p. 9 of the RFA.

**4. How is "employer engagement" defined? What are some examples of "employer engagement" for the purposes of ELL HP Round Three?**

Employer engagement is the practice of connecting adult schools and community colleges with industry leaders to align curriculum, provide work-based learning opportunities (ideally paid), and meet local and regional labor needs. Examples of employer engagement include providing workplace learning opportunities, internships, job placement, etc.

## **ELIGIBILITY QUESTIONS**

**5. Will there be any priority given in Round Three for agencies not eligible for Rounds One or Two? Why are agencies that already received funding in prior rounds eligible to receive funding in Round Three?**

There will be no scoring priority given to agencies not eligible for Rounds One or Two, although for those who participated in Rounds One and Two, past poor performance may be considered.

The Round Three RFA is different than Rounds One and Two with the inclusion of the collaborative Centers and innovative requirements. Round Three awards will go to high-scoring applications that demonstrate meaningful and creative plans to develop ELL Healthcare Pathway Programs through the creation of sustainable Centers of Innovation and Impact in Health Careers.

6. **Are Local Education Agency (LEA) grantees under Round 1 and Round 2 who have unspent funding from a prior round still eligible to apply for Round 3, even if the expenditure deadline for those funds have elapsed?**

Round 3 award consists of a 36-month expenditure spend-down period. Interested applicants must commit to spending grant funds within the allotted period as extensions for this award will not be granted.

In addition, the RFA states the following: "When determining grant recipients, the ELL Healthcare Vocational Pathways Round Three Selection Committee may consider past performance of grantees before awarding additional funds to those reapplying for grants (Education Code, Section 88830(a))." See p. 17 of the RFA.

7. **What if the prospective applicant is unclear as to how their local consortium structure and/or members will comply with the grant requirement to include at least one K-12 adult school? For example, can a County Office of Education or a Regional Occupational (ROP) program qualify as a K-12 adult school?**

The Chancellor's Office recognizes that there may be instances where there is not an available K-12 adult school or a community college to fulfill the application eligibility requirements. In this event, the consortium may still submit an application that aligns with the intent and other requirements of the ELL Healthcare Pathways Round Three RFA.

The application should clearly describe the situation and if efforts were made to these members to encourage creative participation and partnership. In these instances, a consortium and/or members may also consider partnering with another consortium on an application or think creatively for roles with existing members within the design and delivery of the Center beyond program delivery.

## **FUNDING/BUDGET QUESTIONS**

8. **There is concern that if grant funding cannot be used to assist with pre-employment/internship clearance processes it will greatly impact certification and employment outcomes. Can these funds be used to cover background checks, certification exam fees, licensing/certification fees?**

Round Three funds can be used to pay for "Program Required Expenses" such as background checks or licensing exams if the fees are currently being charged to

students. Since these are Proposition 98 funds, they are restricted and must not constitute the gifting of public funds or be used to pay for services that are not required to complete the pathway program.

Grantees will want to ensure the administration of vouchers or program fees are carefully managed. An option may be to procure vouchers for third-party certification or licensing fees as instructional supplies or materials and maintain records of students who receive these vouchers. Any covered fees must be a requirement in the industry for students to obtain employment post completion of an approved healthcare occupational program and be linked to an approved project plan in NOVA.

Please note that funds may **NOT** be used to pay for students' participation in the healthcare pathway programs or other costs such as student stipends, internships, etc.

**9. Can ELL HP funds be used to pay for a student's foreign transcript evaluation?**

The Funds may not be used to pay for foreign transcript evaluation. All expenditures must be in compliance with Proposition 98 which prohibits the gifting of public funds to students.

**10. Access to childcare is a barrier to English as a Second Language (ESL) class participation and persistence. Would it be allowable to use grant funding to pay for childcare for students while engaged in coursework?**

Childcare is an allowable expenditure under the ELL Healthcare Pathway Grant. Grantees will want to ensure the administration is carefully managed.

**11. Would it be allowable to use grant funding to support noncredit-to-credit pathway programs?**

While we encourage alignment of program pathways that support transitions to post-secondary credit programs and employment, expenditures must be in compliance with the funding source specifications.

**12. Funding is allowable for noncredit and K-12 adult education programs (similar to CAEP funding) in development of ELL Healthcare Pathway Programs, including program and curriculum planning and development, program materials, instruction, equipment, and support activities through the creation of Centers of Innovation and Impact in Health Careers. If an ELL student is interested in participating in not-for-credit coursework that is healthcare-related (example: Community Education), can ELL funds be used to pay the cost of those classes?**

This funding is only allowed to be expended on noncredit and K-12 adult education programs. Credit and not-for-credit programs are not eligible. Grant funds may be used to support costs associated with the development of ELL Healthcare Pathway Programs and support activities through the creation of Centers of Innovation and Impact in Health Careers.

**13. Can courses funded by this grant also be open to any noncredit student, or would it be necessary to combine ELL and CAEP funding to allow other, non-ELL, students to enroll in these courses?**

Grant funding is intended to serve English language learners across all levels of English proficiency. Students include those in the approved CAEP Program Areas and based on the minimum required competency level needed to succeed in the healthcare pathway.

**14. Is it acceptable for an application to include subcontracting with Community Based Organizations to provide supportive services?**

For the ELL Healthcare Pathways program, consortia may partner with both internal and external organizations and employer partnerships as that is one of the required components in the Round 3 application. However, funding is restricted to participating consortia members.

**15. Will the funding band amounts be spread out over three years, or provided annually? Will funds be provided in FY 2026-27, or be distributed annually over the three-year grant period?**

This grant provides one-time funding to be distributed in FY 2026-27 and is intended to be expended by grantees within that three-year period (2026-27, 2027-28, and 2028-29). Each year's expenses may be budgeted separately; however, distribution of funding will occur only in the first year.

**16. If consortia group together for a collaborative application, what funding band would apply?**

Consortia submitting a collaborative application may submit for the single highest funding band supported by their combined ELL Student, ELL Resident, and Unmet demand counts as shown in Appendix C of the RFA.

The table in Appendix C may serve as a reference point for collaborating consortia to compare their combined counts to the counts of one or more consortia in higher funding bands. It should be noted that the review committee may make adjustments, awarding more or less than what was requested in the RFA with substantiation. A single award will be granted in this instance.

**17. Is there allowance for indirect costs? Will the Fiscal Agent be allowed to claim an indirect fund?**

Up to a total of 5% in indirect costs to cover the entire project is allowed under this grant. The Fiscal Agent will be required to split the indirect funds with the members that are providing the services to students. See p. 12 of the RFA.

**18. Why is the number of awards limited to a maximum of 25? Would the Chancellor's Office reconsider this limit?**

The intent of the inclusion of a maximum number of awards is to provide funding amounts that have the possibility of making a larger impact within a given area of the state. It is for this reason that this RFA allows and encourages the submission of collaborative applications and the planning and development of Centers at a geographical level beyond a single consortium. This limit is not subject to revision.

**19. If there are limited applications and/or all funding is not awarded, is there a possibility of consortia applying for remaining funds (including the award of funding higher than current funding bands)?**

At this time the Chancellor's Office is looking to grant up to 25 qualified awards based on the scoring criteria and intended outcomes outlined in the RFA. All available funding is anticipated to be awarded.

**20. Will grant funds be disbursed to the consortium, or directly to one or more agencies identified in the application?**

Award funding will be disbursed to the Lead Fiscal Agent that is designated in the application for this Round 3 initiative. Applications must designate a single Lead Fiscal Agent for the participating consortium (or lead consortium in the event of a

collaborative application between multiple consortia).

The Lead Fiscal Agent must be a legal entity able to receive grant funds. The Lead Fiscal Agent will be responsible for distributing funding to participating members in a timely manner. This may require the development and implementation of Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) or other fiscal agreements.

**21. What does “reasonable amount of time” mean in reference to the release of funds? Is there a time frame from when the fiscal agent receives funds that they must be disbursed?**

Lead Fiscal Agents must disburse funds in a timely manner consistent with providing participating members with ample time to receive and expend funds in order to meet their goals and activities within the three-year period as outlined in the Program Workplan. See p. 10 of the RFA.

In addition, it is recommended that consortia serving as Lead Fiscal Agents follow the 45-day fund administrator process outlined on p. 27 of the [\*\*CAEP Fiscal Management Guide\*\*](#) to pass through funds to participating members.

**22. Can instruction for this grant be provided via mirrored courses?**

Round 3 calls for proposals that implement an accelerated learning model(s) for in-demand healthcare occupations. The accelerated learning models are identified in p. 8 of the RFA. In addition, funding is permissible for noncredit and K-12 adult education programs (similar to CAEP funding). Funding may not be used toward credit programs.

## **GENERAL/APPLICATION REQUIREMENT QUESTIONS**

**23. Where can I find a recording of the ELL HP Round Three Bidder’s Conference webinar and related PowerPoint Presentation?**

The Bidder’s Conference recording and PowerPoint have been posted on the CAEP webpage of the Chancellor’s Office [website](#), and via the links below:

- [\*\*Bidder’s Conference Webinar Recording\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Bidder’s Conference PowerPoint Presentation\*\*](#)

**24. Is it acceptable to use Round Three funds to support programs that have demonstrated measurable success with students? In this case, is there a preference between scaling efforts from Rounds One and Two versus piloting new designs with the possibility of future scaling statewide?**

Yes, it is acceptable for applications to support efforts begun in Rounds One and Two, if they fulfill the additional requirements specified in Round Three, which include the creation of Centers of Innovation and Impact in Health Careers and sustainability after the ELL Healthcare Pathways funding ends.

High-quality applications will demonstrate effective strategies to achieve the most student outcomes possible within the selected healthcare pathway programs through the creation of Centers of Innovation and Impact in Health Careers.

**25. The RFA document was released the December 18th (not the 16th), but the application wasn't released until January 12th. Will the deadline for application submission be adjusted for those changes?**

The application submission will not be extended. The deadline to submit application and materials in NOVA is no later than 5:00 p.m. on March 18, 2026.

**26. Can regional consortia apply together, and if so, is there a limit to the number of consortia that may apply collaboratively in a single application? In this situation, which consortium's name should be used on the application?**

Yes, consortia may apply together. There is no limit to the number of consortia that may apply together. In this situation, they must submit a single application; none of the participating consortia may submit a separate application.

Applicants should designate one consortium to serve as the lead consortium for the application and should put the name of that consortium on the application with the participating consortia and members in the plan details.

An application with multiple consortia, if awarded, will receive a single award, and it will be the responsibility of one consortium to serve as the Lead Fiscal Agent and perform funding activities including MOUs and disbursement. See p. 14 of the RFA.

**27. Is the signed Letter of Intent (LOI) to Participate specifically for funded partners, and Partner Commitment letters for non-funded partners? Do we need commitment letters from all non-participating consortium members as well as for any non-funded community partners in the model? Is additional supporting documentation required? Are Partner Commitment Letters scored as part of the 75-point workplan?**

Supporting Documentation is worth a maximum of 5 points, separate from the workplan, and includes:

- Signed **Letter of Intent to Participate** from participating consortium members (Required)
- Partner Commitment Letter (Required)
- Other (Optional)

Documentation requires both a Signed Letter of Intent to Participate from participating members and Partner Commitment Letter(s) and allows for additional documents to be uploaded as "Other". Additional supporting documentation is not required but is allowed. As a required section, the documentation section will receive a maximum of 5 points.

However, if the documentation does not align with the workplan, the workplan score (75 points) may be impacted. Additional information on these application components can be found in Appendices A (p. 21) and B (p. 24) of the RFA.

**28. Is the ELL Letter of Intent to Participate (Appendix A) due prior to the application deadline of March 18th? How do we complete the LOI in NOVA?**

The Letter of Intent to Participate from participating members is due along with the rest of the application on March 18. To complete this requirement, applicants must upload a copy of their member's (or members') Letter(s) of Intent to Participate into that section of the grant application in NOVA. Information on these application sections can be found in Appendices A and B of the RFA, including detail on uploading the files into NOVA. See pp. 6, 21, and 24 of the RFA.

Please note this reference is not for an LOI in the sense that it signals intention to participate from the consortium; this RFA's formal grant application serves that purpose. Rather, this LOI is from each participating consortium member signaling that they are committed and have the capacity to participate in alignment with the plan

outlined in the application.

**29. Will the Chancellor's Office provide a template for prospective applicants to use offline while partners are collaborating and preparing the application? That would be helpful to the consortia.**

No, an application template outside of NOVA will not be provided. The program workplan is available both in the RFA and within NOVA. Prospective applicants are free to use these resources to structure offline work and collaborative efforts.

**30. Is it acceptable for one person to submit the application and another person to serve as Project Lead?**

Yes, the Fiscal Lead should submit the application. See p. 11 of the RFA. Please note it will be important to ensure contacts are kept up to date in the NOVA application as Chancellor's Office program staff will use this information to connect with the designated project representative(s).

**31. We are a consortium of two, one college district and one school district. Our consortia partner is not directly interested, but happy to see the College deliver this. Are we applying as the consortia, or as a single member?**

Applications must be submitted under the name of a consortium and require the inclusion of one community college and one adult school. While it is possible that an adult school or community college is not interested in participating, consider innovative ways of collaboration for the Center including nonfunded member partnerships or partnership with a nearby consortium.

**32. Are there any specific incentives intended to drive employer engagement, for example around the creation of clinical sites for programs like Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) and Licensed Vocational Nurse (LVN)? Are there any specific incentives for the corporate ownership behind Skilled Nursing Facilities to engage with adult schools or community colleges?**

No, there are no specific (monetary) incentives under Round Three. Grant funds are not allowed to be expended in the form of incentive payments to employers. Building relationships with relevant local employers and educating current or prospective employer partners about the benefits to their workforce can be an effective way to incentivize employer engagement.

**33. Is the objective of this grant intended to support students (which may take longer than three years) or to support three years' worth of instruction?**

The objective of these grant funds is to expand the number of ELL students enrolling in programs, completing these programs, and preparing for employment in one (1) or more of the eight (8) designated healthcare vocational pathway programs outlined in the RFA to increase the number of health care providers, statewide, under the Governor's Care Economy Workforce Development Package.

High-quality applications will demonstrate innovation, maximize outcomes for ELL students pursuing a healthcare focused vocational pathway, and identify strategies for sustainability beyond this three-year period.

**34. Rounds One and Two included those students who also had Cultural Barriers. Does Round 3 also include these students?**

ELL Healthcare funding is intended to serve English language learners across all levels of English proficiency. Students include those in the approved CAEP Program Areas and based on the minimum required competency level needed to succeed in the healthcare pathway. See p.6 of the RFA.

**35. Is it acceptable for an application to include as Project Lead an individual that would be hired subsequent to grant award?**

Yes, it would be acceptable to hire a Project Lead after the grant is awarded, subject to local governance and hiring policies. Note that NOVA requires a Project Lead to be stated and participate in completing this grant application prior to award. In this situation, the newly hired individual would then need to gain NOVA access and be assigned as Project Lead after the application and award process.

**36. It can be challenging to hire and retain Certified Nursing Assistant teachers, as they are required to be credentialed and a Resident Nurse. Is CTE certification required for instructors to teach students under the terms of this grant, or can any Adult Education teacher teach these courses?**

Since these are Prop 98 State apportionment funds, participating adult schools and California Community Colleges must ensure that program instructors meet local and state minimum qualification and credentialing requirements for instruction in the relevant pathway.

**37. Will there be positive scoring considerations for applications from consortia or LEAs that have displayed strong outcomes in Rounds One and Two and that have expended all the prior funding?**

There will not be any positive scoring consideration provided to applications from consortia or LEAs that have displayed outcomes in Rounds One and Two and/or that have expended all prior funding. Applicants are still encouraged to showcase those successes and outcomes in the Round Three application, as these elements may be indicative of a strong application. This latest funding opportunity is separate from prior rounds and subject to new requirements and goals. Applications will be scored based on their approach to these criteria.

**38. Are consortia grantees that participated in earlier rounds of this grant required to continue with all member partners, or can members be added and/or dropped in Round Three?**

There is no requirement to continue with participating members from prior rounds. Applicants will want to ensure there is commitment from interested participating members to be able to follow through with the associated project deliverables and periods.

**39. Should local Workforce Development Boards be partners?**

There is no requirement that Workforce Development Boards be partners although it is certainly encouraged. Workforce Development Boards can help consortia members better understand regional labor needs, support the inclusion of training programs on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL), potentially access other funding sources to support program sustainability, and more.

**40. Do adult schools need to be funded partners for the consortium to qualify, or is it okay if they are unfunded partners (for example, our unfunded Adult Schools host information days for their students to consider the ELL HC Pathway programs)?**

Yes, it is acceptable for non-funded partners to participate in ELL HP Round Three grant activities. The role and activities of these partners should be spelled out clearly in the program workplan, including how they will support the development and operation of the Center for Innovation and Impact in Health Careers.

**41. Does Applied Behavior Analysis Technician (who may work in school districts) qualify under healthcare occupation #4: Mental and Behavioral Health Roles?**

No. Applied Behavior Analysis Technician is considered an "Other" pathway as it is not listed in the examples provided for Mental and Behavioral Health Roles. Because of this, the application should demonstrate that this occupation provides a livable wage in the county/region where the healthcare pathway is being developed, as well as evidence of hiring demand. This proposal should be supported by labor market and wage data. See p. 10 of the RFA.

**42. Would it be more beneficial for an applicant to include all pathways for which it could provide instruction, or to pick one pathway on which to focus?**

High-quality applications will include the number of pathways for which participating consortia and members can demonstrate the most impactful plans for the development of healthcare focused vocational pathway programs and support activities through the creation of a Center for Innovation and Impact in Health Careers.

While an application may benefit from including more than one pathway, this would only be the case if the application successfully demonstrates intentional and impactful planning and the ability to generate meaningful outcomes for ELL Students.

**43. Is it acceptable for a Center funded under this grant to target seniors at local high schools that include sizable numbers of ELL students?**

Participants must be at least 18 years of age to be eligible to participate in ELL Healthcare Pathway programs. The intent of this funding is to target Adult Education programs, including noncredit and K-12 adult schools.

**44. Is it acceptable for a consortium that participated in prior rounds to add new pathways in this application?**

Yes, it is acceptable for consortia that participated in prior rounds to submit an application that includes the addition of one or more new pathway(s) beyond those developed in prior rounds, as long as the application fulfills all the other terms and requirements of the RFA.

**45. Is it acceptable for applications to include pathway programs for "Other" pathways not included on the list of eight healthcare occupations? Can "Other" occupations be included if they show growth but are not categorized as "bright outlook" on O-Net? What are the criteria for "strong regional hiring demand?"**

Yes, applicants may include a proposal to develop one or more healthcare vocational pathway programs based on a healthcare occupation(s) that is not listed among the designated healthcare career pathways. To do so, the applicant must demonstrate that the proposed healthcare occupation provides a minimum livable wage in the county region where the healthcare pathway is being developed, as well as evidence of hiring demand. This proposal must be supported by area labor market and wage data. See p.10 of the RFA.

**46. Would it help to support the need for an "Other" healthcare occupation if a consortium has established pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeships in health care that are registered with the Department of Apprenticeship Standards (DAS)?**

Yes, the establishment of registered pre-apprenticeships and/or apprenticeships would help establish need, along with the labor market data and employer partnerships. An example of a strong case for an "Other" pathway could be pairing the DAS registration with data showing that the occupation pays a living wage for your region and that employers are actively hiring in that occupation.

**47. Is it acceptable for native English-speaking students to participate in programs funded by this grant?**

These grant funds are intended to support program development for English Language Learner (ELL) students. For this grant, ELLs are defined as individuals who are unable to communicate fluently or learn effectively in English, who often come from non-English-speaking homes and backgrounds, and who typically require specialized or modified instruction in both the English language and in their academic courses. Participating members will have the discretion to determine appropriate level admissions criteria into funded programs.

**48. We are considering a healthcare program that is not on the list of eight healthcare occupations. Can we use Centers of Excellence (COE) data (instead of the other sources provided) to show that it exceeds the minimum livable wage?**

Yes, COE data would be considered an acceptable source of Labor Market Indicator (LMI)

data to demonstrate that a proposed "Other" pathway exceeds the minimum livable wage in the relevant consortium service area, as well as describing a demand/need to demonstrate value of the program. However, in addition to COE data, the RFA outlines the requirement of utilizing as least one of the data sources listed on p. 10 of the RFA.

- 49. Our county has a very high minimum living wage. If a healthcare career is not on the list of healthcare occupations, but its average salary is higher than the average salary of many of the other eight occupations, will it be considered even if it doesn't meet some estimates of the county's minimum living wage?**

In this situation, the application should provide clear justification and documentation of the average salary of the proposed "Other" pathway to demonstrate higher earnings than the designated pathways. Reviewers will give this claim due consideration and score accordingly.

## **REPORTING/NOVA QUESTIONS**

- 50. Is the intent of this grant a rapid upskilling and employment of ELL students or the creation of more sustainable ongoing systems to train and educate ELL students in healthcare pathways?**

This grant is intended to support both of these outcomes. High-quality applications will demonstrate the ability both to rapidly develop and implement program pathways that will lead to the upskilling and employment of ELL students, while including strategies to maintain long-term sustainability and relevance as a resource for education, employment, and community partners in the area.

- 51. With entering employment as a tracked and reported outcome, should applicants only enroll students that have right to work and/or a Social Security Number?**

No. These programs are subject to open-entry access and must admit and enroll students regardless of their right to work and/or Social Security Number. That said, programs should always provide transparency to prospective enrollees around certification and employment requirements within a given occupation or pathway, so that students understand the potential transitions available to them upon completion before investing their time and effort in a program.

**52. If a pathway has one or more advanced degrees, is it expected that the related outcome metrics numbers will be lower than those for more entry-level careers?**

Round Three funding will consist of a 36-month expenditure spend period with 6 total biannual progress reports and a cumulative final report required to capture outcome metrics. Grantees will report outcome metrics in accordance with the reporting periods. While advanced degree completion can be an important part of these pathways (particularly in alignment with the Vision 2030 goals), the timeline of most advanced degrees will fall outside the three-year reporting window of this grant.

Outcomes metrics are related to program participation and completion with a certificate or license in what should be a high-demand and living-wage occupation (in the area), as well as transfer to employment and/or post-secondary education. These metrics goals should not be impacted by the number of advanced degrees available in a given pathway (e.g., CNA → LVN → Registered Nurse (RN) or Bachelor of Science Nursing (BSN)).

**53. In the application in NOVA, should Collaborative Partners only include the names of participating consortium members?**

Yes. In the "Collaborative Partners" section of the NOVA application, add only the funded members as that section determines which members will be listed in the budget section.