



## **K-12 Strong Workforce Program (SWP) FY 2026–27 Request for Applications (RFA) Frequently Asked Questions - with TAP feedback**

The following questions were compiled as part of the K-12 SWP RFA process. For additional guidance, please refer to the K-12 SWP RFA [Bidder's Conference](#).

### **General Questions**

#### **1) Why is the application period so short?**

The Round 9 application window is shorter than the previous funding cycle to provide additional time for the application review and award determination process. Given the volume and complexity of applications received statewide, the extended review period supports a thorough evaluation of project quality, regional workforce alignment, partnerships, budgets, and matching fund commitments. While the application period is condensed, the core program requirements remain largely aligned with prior funding rounds, enabling many LEAs to build upon existing partnerships, planning efforts, labor market analyses, and pathway development work already underway.

#### **FAQ with RFA Citations document:**

The Round 9 RFA establishes the application deadline as 5 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 2, 2026. The RFA does not provide a specific explanation for the length of the application period. Applicants should plan according to the published timeline. Applications will be reviewed by trained regional K-12 Selection Committee members beginning Oct. 6, 2026 with the review period concluding Nov. 20, 2026.

#### **2) Will there be any extensions due to the reduced submission period compared to the prior year RFA?**

The submission deadline has been extended to 10/5/2026 at 5:00pm Pacific Time. NOVA will not accept applications after the extension deadline. The RFA also explicitly states that there will be no extensions to the grant performance period.

#### **3) Will the Portfolio of Investment be explained in more detail on the RFA?**

Yes. The Round 9 RFA includes additional clarification that Selection Committees

consider both application scores and the development of a balanced regional portfolio of investments. This means funding recommendations may also take into account regional workforce priorities, student populations served, pathway and industry sector diversity, and equitable distribution of funds to ensure investments collectively advance the goals of the K–12 Strong Workforce Program.

The K–12 Selection Committee may award less than the amount requested based on the proposed scope of work and its responsibility to create a portfolio of awards that best meets the needs of the region's economy and the intent of the legislation. Selection Committees also consider project merit, proportionality of the request, regional priorities, and local labor market demand.

The specific award criteria for each region are provided through the regional K–12 Selection Committee.

RFA: pp. 7–8 and 14–15.

**4) If multiple leads are on the application/project, will both of those people receive communication moving forward, as leads? In the past NOVA has had limited ability to contact people?**

Communication through the NOVA system is received only by the Project Lead. Designate one individual as the Project Lead, who is the first point of contact and the accountable party for the project, with permissions to submit and edit the application, budgets and contacts, and progress and expenditure reports. Additional people may be assigned as Project Lead Alternates, Project Contributors and Reporters, or Project Viewers. These roles carry limited permissions and do not receive NOVA communications, so keep the Project Lead's contact information current and share communications internally as needed.

RFA: pp. 20–21.

**5) What are the significant differences in the application between Round 8 and Round 9?**

The most significant Round 9 updates relate to the Data Sharing MOU requirement, additional clarification regarding the regional portfolio of investments approach, refinements to application questions and scoring guidance, and updated instructions related to project design, partnerships, and reporting expectations. Applicants should review the Round 9 RFA in its entirety to understand all current requirements.

**6) Will the responses to some of the questions that will be submitted to the K–12 SWP Helpdesk be share in a Q&A?**

Yes. Questions received will be addressed in the FAQ section of the K–12 Strong Workforce Program webpage.

RFA: p. 18.

**7) Was participation in the Bidder's Conference webinar required in order to submit an application?**

No. Registration was required to attend the live webinar, but attendance is not a condition of applying. The RFA does not identify attendance at the Bidder's Conference as an eligibility or application submission requirement. The Bidder's Conference is described as an informational webinar regarding the project submission process and is also posted to the K–12 SWP webpage.

RFA: pp. 16–17.

**8) The template link in the RFA opens the prior year's materials. Should we use the Round 8 templates?**

Applicants should use the Round 9 application tools and templates provided by the Chancellor's Office. Do not substitute prior-round templates unless the Chancellor's Office specifically directs applicants to do so.

RFA: pp. 34–35.

## **Allowable Expenditures**

**9) Can K–12 SWP funds support staffing through a contracted workforce development partner to recruit employers, develop work-based learning sites, coordinate internships/job shadows, and connect students in participating CTE pathways to WBL opportunities, while leveraging WIOA Title I funding to pay student wages?**

K–12 SWP funds may be used for allowable activities that support employer engagement, work-based learning development, partnership coordination, and student access to high-quality career pathway experiences. This may include contracting with a workforce development partner to recruit employers, develop work-based learning opportunities, coordinate internships and job-shadowing experiences, and facilitate connections between students and industry partners. The allowability of specific activities and costs will be evaluated based on their alignment with K–12 SWP objectives, applicable grant requirements, and the project's proposed scope of work.

Applicants are responsible for ensuring that any non-K–12 SWP funds used in conjunction with the project comply with the requirements of the applicable funding program. Additionally, applicants must ensure that costs are not duplicated across funding sources.

The RFA recognizes workforce development agencies as Collaborative Partners and identifies work-based learning as an appropriate partner contribution.

K–12 SWP funds may not be used for student expenses, activities, or direct services. Any WIOA-funded student compensation must comply with WIOA requirements and must not duplicate K–12 SWP expenditures.

RFA: pp. 13 and 46–47.

**10) While community colleges will not be applying but serve as partners, could some of the funds for the budget be used for community college support that may be needed with developing and implementing paths from high schools to community colleges?**

Community colleges are required partners, and the application must describe a purposeful partnership to develop clearly defined K–14 pathways. The RFA also identifies examples of community college contributions, including curriculum alignment, counseling, dual enrollment, and leveraging existing community college SWP efforts.

However, the RFA does not expressly state that K–12 SWP grant funds may be transferred directly to a community college. Any proposed expenditure should be evaluated against the allowable-cost requirements, the project budget structure, and applicable contracting requirements.

RFA: pp. 11–12 and 32–33.

**11) Are paid internships for students an allowable expense?**

No. The RFA lists student expenses, activities, or direct services as unallowable, so K–12 SWP funds may not be used to pay students. The funds may support the staffing and coordination needed to develop and operate work-based learning. Identify another funding source for student compensation and review the arrangement with your Regional Consortium.

K–12 SWP funds may not be used for student expenses, activities, or direct services. Therefore, K–12 SWP funds cannot be used to pay student wages for internships.

RFA: pp. 46–47

**12) May grant funds pay for a teacher to take the CSET examinations to add an authorization?**

The RFA does not specifically identify CSET examination or credentialing costs as an allowable expenditure. Applicants should demonstrate that any proposed cost is necessary and reasonable, allocable to the K–12 SWP project, and not a general LEA responsibility or supplanting cost.

RFA: pp. 44–46.

**13) May award funds be used to upgrade or improve CTE facilities?**

No. K–12 SWP funds may not be used for improvements to land, buildings, or equipment that materially increase their value or useful life. Construction and remodeling that increase an asset's value or appreciably extend its useful life are not allowable unless authorized by the funding source.

At the same time, the application includes a Project Investment section for applicants to identify project investments that improve CTE infrastructure, equipment, and/or facilities. Applicants should therefore distinguish between an allowable project-related investment and an unallowable capital improvement. Equipment over \$5,000 requires prior approval from the Regional Consortium.

The positive consideration question about investment in CTE infrastructure, equipment, technology, laboratories, or facilities is a scoring question, not authorization to spend K–12 SWP funds on facilities. Describe investments that support your program, including those funded from other sources, with enough detail for reviewers to identify them.

RFA: pp. 27 and 33, 47–49

**14) What is the indirect cost rate, and does the 4% limit apply to a contractor or subrecipient?**

An LEA may charge a maximum of 4% administrative indirect costs for the term of the grant. The RFA provides the calculation:

$\text{Grant Amount} \div 1.04 = \text{Grant Operating Budget}$ ;  $\text{Grant Operating Budget} \times 4\% = \text{Indirect Costs}$ .

The RFA does not specify whether a contractor's burdened rate must separately identify an indirect component. Contractor pricing should therefore be handled through the LEA's applicable procurement and contracting requirements and must meet the RFA's necessary, reasonable, allocable, and non-supplanting standards.

RFA: p. 15 and pp. 32–33, 44–45.

**15) Where should a partner's scope of work and costs appear in NOVA?**

The RFA requires applicants to prepare a budget by object code for the Lead LEA and each K–12 Partner Agency, as applicable; provide narrative descriptions explaining how funds will be used; and identify the source and description of matching funds. When a partner agency is included in the application and will receive funds, the Funds and/or Services option must be selected. If Funds is selected, a separate budget card will be generated for that partner agency in NOVA.

RFA: pp. 12–13 and 32–33

**16) If a contractor bills a burdened rate, must the indirect portion of that rate be**

### **separately identified?**

No. Contractor rates charged to the grant should not include indirect costs. Indirect costs may only be claimed by the awarded LEA using its approved indirect cost rate, as applicable. Costs billed by contractors should be limited to the actual costs of providing the contracted services and must directly support approved project activities. Applicants should ensure that contractor budgets do not include indirect or administrative charges that would function as indirect costs.

#### **17) May partner meetings, reporting, supervision, and compliance work be budgeted as direct personnel or professional service costs when those activities are included in the approved work plan?**

Yes. Project-related personnel and professional/consultant services may be allowable when they are necessary, reasonable, allocable to the approved project, and not a general LEA responsibility. Meeting and conference costs are allowable under specified conditions and require prior approval from the Regional Consortium.

The RFA does not specifically identify partner supervision or compliance activities as automatically allowable; the applicant should demonstrate the direct connection to the approved scope of work and budget. Compliance activities such as reporting and general management of the funds is not an allowable direct expense but can be paid for from the indirect costs granted to the lead agency.

#### **18) Does that mean CTEIG funds were initiated in that time period or we received money for that time period?**

The Round 9 application asks applicants to indicate whether the organization was awarded CTEIG funds in 2025–26. The question is about the award, not when expenditures occurred.

RFA: pp. 44–49.

## **Match Funds**

#### **19) Can we use the GSPP grant as match?**

Yes. Golden State Pathways Program (GSPP) funds may be used as match for K–12 Strong Workforce Program (K–12 SWP) grants, if the following conditions are met:

- The funds directly support and benefit the K–12 SWP project described in the application.
- The funds are not being used as match for another K–12 SWP application or any other grant simultaneously.
- The funds are not in-kind contributions.
- For consortium awards, only the portion of GSPP funds allocated to the applicant's district may be counted toward the match.

- Unused GSPP funds from a prior year may be used, provided all other criteria are met.
- GSPP match must be within the performance period of the funded project.

GSPP is not listed among the unacceptable match sources in the K–12 SWP RFA.

**20) Are LCFF apportionments an allowable match source?**

Yes. The RFA lists school district and charter school LCFF apportionments as an acceptable financial match source. Match must directly support and benefit the project proposed in the application.

**FAQ with RFA Citations document:**

RFA: p. 13.

**21) May a county office of education count its own unrestricted general fund expenditures as match?**

Yes. However, the match must be within the performance period of the awarded project. A county office of education may count its own unrestricted funds as match when they directly support the proposed project, are not in-kind, and are not used as match elsewhere. A county office operating an ROCP matches one dollar for every one dollar awarded when the ROCP is the Lead LEA; otherwise, the two-to-one ratio applies.

The RFA does not specifically identify unrestricted county office general fund expenditures as a match source. Applicants should use only match sources permitted under the RFA and applicable Chancellor's Office guidance.

RFA: p. 13.

**22) May child nutrition funds be counted as match if the proposed project works with our food services program?**

The RFA does not specifically identify child nutrition funds as an acceptable match source. Financial match must directly support and benefit the proposed project. Because child nutrition funding has its own program restrictions, applicants should not count it as match unless the applicable funding requirements permit the expenditure to directly support the proposed K–12 SWP project.

RFA: p. 13.

**23) Are Dual Enrollment Opportunity Grant funds allowable as match, and may we count the full award or only the current year?**

Yes. Dual Enrollment Opportunity Grants are an acceptable match source. Only the portion supporting this project during the performance period may be counted, and the funds may not serve as match for another application or grant. Middle College and Early College funds count when they are Dual Enrollment Opportunity Grant funds supporting this project's pathway.

Dual Enrollment Opportunity Grants are listed as an acceptable financial match source. The match must directly support and benefit the proposed project.

RFA: p. 13.

**24) May a partner organization that receives K–12 SWP funds for contracted work also provide match from its own resources?**

Yes. A partner organization that receives K–12 SWP funds for contracted work may also provide match, provided the match is separate from the grant-funded work, directly supports the project, and is supported by appropriate documentation. Match may include allowable partner-funded personnel costs, services, or other expenditures with a verifiable monetary value that are not paid with K–12 SWP funds. The same costs may not be claimed as both a grant-funded expense and a match contribution.

**25) Round 8 listed “any other source, except those described below” as an allowable match source. That language does not appear in Round 9. Is the Round 9 list of acceptable match sources exhaustive?**

The RFA names the sources the program expects to see. A source not named there may be used as match when it is not among the unacceptable sources, directly supports and benefits the project, is not used as match for another K–12 SWP application or another grant, and is not an in-kind contribution. The same test applies to Golden State Pathways Program funds, above.

RFA: p. 13.

**26) In a consortium application, must each district provide a 2:1 match against its own budget, or may the match be met across the consortium as a whole, with one LEA contributing more than another?**

The RFA requires a proportional match of \$2 for every \$1 awarded for all LEAs other than qualifying ROCPs. It does not expressly state that each K–12 Partner Agency must provide match in direct proportion to its individual project budget or that match may be pooled across a consortium.

RFA: p. 13.

**27) What qualifies as a philanthropic source for match purposes?**

Philanthropic sources typically include private foundations, community foundations, corporate foundations, charitable nonprofits, and other private donors that provide resources to support educational or workforce development initiatives.

Philanthropic sources are identified as an acceptable match source when they directly support the program.

RFA: p. 13

**28) If an industry partner provides match, must that partner be entered in NOVA, and does entering them make them a K-12 Partner Agency for purposes of the three-application maximum?**

An industry partner providing match does not need to be entered as a K-12 Partner Agency solely because it is contributing match. Match may be provided by partners that support the project through allowable expenditures with a verifiable monetary value, including personnel time, services, equipment, supplies, or other project-related costs, provided the contribution directly benefits the project and is appropriately documented. K-12 SWP Financial Match Guidelines specifically recognize partner-funded personnel costs and other direct expenditures as allowable forms of financial match.

A partner should be entered as a K-12 Partner Agency in NOVA only when it is participating in the project as a funded K-12 partner agency, not solely because it is providing match. Accordingly, an industry partner contributing match does not become a K-12 Partner Agency for purposes of the three-application maximum simply by providing match.

RFA: pp. 12–13, 24–25

**29) How narrowly is “directly support and benefit the project” applied? Does a partner district's general pathway spending in the target sector count, or only spending at the schools and pathways named in the application?**

Financial match must directly support and benefit the project proposed in the grant. Applicants should identify the specific activity, service, resource, or expenditure being counted as match and explain its connection to the proposed project.

RFA: p. 13 and pp. 32–33.

## **Pathways**

**30) Do Adult Charter High Schools meet eligibility if students are working on their diploma?**

Eligibility depends on the LEA type and student population served. The RFA permits an Adult Education Program to participate as a Lead or K–12 Partner Agency only if it serves students age 18 and under, as approved by the local board, and the application specifies the percentage of students served who are 18 or under.

Adult Education Programs serving students over age 18 may participate as Collaborative Partners.

RFA: p. 10.

**31) For middle schools that want to apply, is the middle school supposed to**

**choose a pathway that feeds into a high school within its own district?**

Not necessarily. Middle school projects must align to a specific high school CTE pathway and demonstrate collaboration with at least one high school, but that high school does not have to be within the same district. If the aligned high school is in another district, the high school district should be identified as either a partner agency (funded and/or served) or a collaborative partner (not funded and or served). Applicants should select the high school pathway that best supports their students' transition into secondary CTE programs.

**32) What if only some of your schools within the district are rural, and some are not. Will that be considered?**

Lead LEA rural designation will be automatically determined in NOVA based on available data.

**33) If our LEA is part of a consortium application led by another district, does that reduce the amount we can request on our own applications?**

No. The maximum funding level applies to each application, based on the combined ADA of the LEAs seeking funds on that application. Participating in a consortium application does not lower the maximum available on your own applications. Note that an LEA may appear on no more than three applications as a Lead LEA or K-12 Partner Agency; being listed as a Collaborative Partner does not count toward that limit.

**34) If an LEA participates as a Collaborative Partner only, what are the restrictions on its participation, financially and programmatically?**

The RFA specifically identifies fiscal/financial contribution as a Collaborative Partner role. Only listed K-12 partner agencies can participate in K-12 SWP activities and collaborative partners are reserved for LEAs that are not being funded or served from the project.

RFA: pp. 12 and 24-25

**35) May LEAs that are not named on the application participate in grant activities if they fund their own participation?**

Any K-12 LEA that will receive K-12 SWP funds or services must be identified as a K-12 Partner Agency in the application. A K-12 LEA that does not receive funds or services may be identified as a Collaborative Partner.

If an LEA independently conducts related activities using its own resources but is not receiving K-12 SWP funds or services, the RFA does not specifically prohibit that activity; however, it should not be represented as part of the approved K-12 SWP project unless appropriately identified in the application.

RFA: pp. 12–13.

## Scoring

**36) Should the equity gap response address gaps within our own organization or broader regional equity gaps?**

The RFA specifically requires equity-gap data within the identified CTE sector/pathway and focuses on how unduplicated pupils access, participate in, and complete CTE coursework.

RFA: p. 29.

## NOVA

**37) When is the Round 9 application available in NOVA, and what should I do if I cannot create an application?**

The Round 9 application opened in NOVA on Sept. 10, 2026. If the option to create a new application does not appear for your LEA, confirm your NOVA account role and permissions in NOVA, then contact [K12SWP@CCCCO.edu](mailto:K12SWP@CCCCO.edu) with your LEA name and CDS code.

## Data Sharing MOU

**38) Are separate data MOUs required for each partner as part of our submission requirements?**

Yes. A Data Sharing MOU with the Chancellor's Office is required for the K–12 SWP Lead LEA, if applicable, and all K–12 Partner Agencies, or an action plan with an expected timeline for securing the MOU.

RFA: p. 34.

**39) The MOU deadline is Nov. 20, but LEAs won't know the preliminary awards until Nov 20. Should all applicants have an active MOU on file in case they are awarded?**

Applicants upload either a Data Sharing MOU with the Chancellor's Office or an action plan with a timeline for securing one as part of the supporting documentation. All applicants must then have a Data Sharing MOU on file with the Chancellor's Office by Nov. 20, 2026. Failure to meet that deadline will result in award termination.

RFA: p. 34.

**40) If an LEA was funded in a prior round, is an MOU already on file, and does it**

### **need to be the updated DataVista MOU?**

If an approved Data Sharing MOU is already on file with the Chancellor's Office, a new MOU is not required. Applicants that have been previously awarded are encouraged to confirm whether a current MOU is on file. The Data Sharing MOU and instructions are available for download on the K–12 SWP RFA website.

RFA: pp. 34–35.

#### **41) Who signs the MOU on the LEA side, and where should the executed MOU be submitted?**

The Round 9 RFA requires the Data Sharing MOU for the Lead LEA, if applicable, and all K–12 Partner Agencies, or an action plan with an expected timeline for securing the MOU. For signature, submission, file-format, and submission-location instructions, applicants should follow the current K–12 SWP Data Sharing MOU instructions provided by the Chancellor's Office.