COLORADO
Department of Education

Educator Recruitment and Retention (ERR) Financial Assistance Program

Guidance for Colorado Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs)

What is it?

Under this program, qualified program applicants can apply for up to $7,500 in one-time financial assistance toward their educator preparation program costs if they commit to teaching in an educator shortage area for three years.

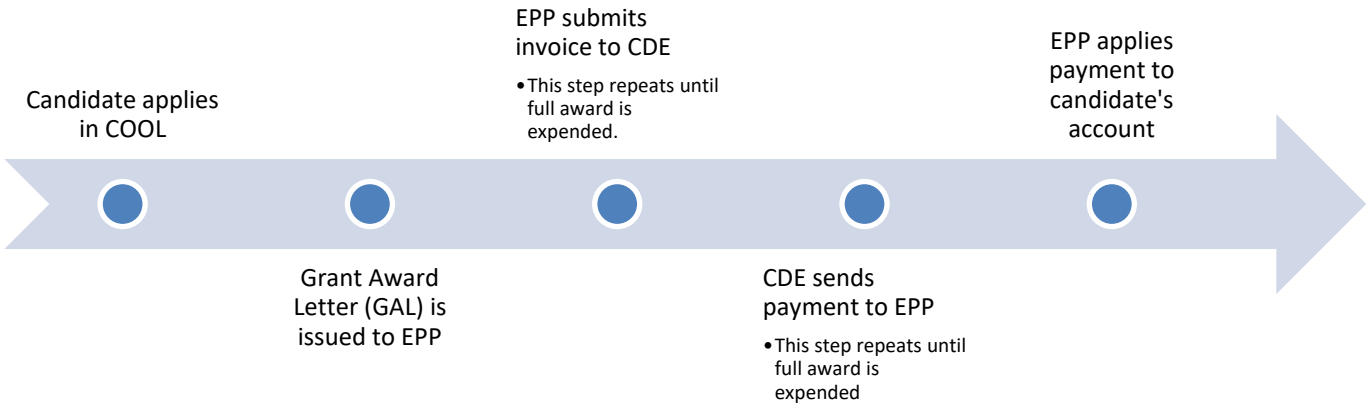
Who is eligible?

Applicants can meet eligibility criteria for the program by first being enrolled in a Colorado-approved traditional or alternative educator preparation program (EPP) (or institute of higher education for applicants pursuing a CTE credential) and then through three different pathways:

1. Has an earned bachelor's or higher degree from a regionally accredited college or university and has secured employment as an alternative teacher or temporary educator eligibility (TEE) educator in an educator shortage area; or
2. Is currently employed as a paraprofessional; or
3. Has secured a position as a CTE instructor in a rural or small rural district and meets state CTE requirements

Recipients must commit to serve in an educator shortage area in a Colorado public school for three years as a condition of receiving the award.

What does the award process look like?



Awards made to candidates whose program fees/tuition is billed in increments rather than one lump sum are referred to as ongoing awards. Invoices for these awards must be submitted to CDE as the candidate incurs fees/tuition. CDE will send remaining balance reminders to applicable EPP contacts and invoices for these awards will be accepted during designated windows. Below are the windows scheduled for 2026-27.

- The application will be open during the following windows:
    - Application Window 1: July 1 through August 20, 2026
    - Application Window 2: December 1, 2026 through January 15, 2027
        - NOTE: The opening of Window 2 is entirely dependent on whether all funds have been allocated during Window 1
- CDE will issue Grant Award Letters (GALs) to EPPs for newly awarded candidates in October 2026 and March 2027.

Invoices for new and ongoing awards may be submitted any time below and must be submitted through the online portal.

- Invoice Portal Window 1: no later than October 31st, 2026.
    - Payments will be processed in November (please allow up to 1 month for payments to be dispersed).
- Invoice Portal Window 2: no later than January 31st, 2027
    - Payments will be processed in February (please allow up to 1 month for payments to be dispersed).
- Invoice Portal Window 3: no later than March 31st, 2027
    - Payments will be processed in April (please allow up to 1 month for payments to be dispersed).
- Invoice Portal Window 4: no later than May 31st, 2027
    - Payments will be processed in June (please allow up to 1 month for payments to be dispersed).
    - Summer tuition may be included on Window 4 invoices if a bill has been issued to the student before May 31st, 2027. Otherwise, summer tuition can be invoiced when the portal opens again in the fall.

Process for Ongoing Awards

- CDE will send remaining balance reminders for ongoing awards to EPPs in September 2026 and February 2027.
    - EPPs will be asked to provide any applicable updates or changes via a Google sheet provided by CDE in both the fall and spring.
    - This process helps ensure accurate accounting of available funds and supports timely reallocation to ERR applicants if needed.
    - It is important that EPPs keep their points of contact up to date so that the appropriate individuals receive these communications and can respond promptly.

Invoicing Tips

- Invoices must include the following details:
    - An invoice number generated by the EPP; the payment will include this invoice number for reference.
    - Grant number: 3280
    - General description of what is to be paid, such as “program fees” or “tuition charges” with each applicable individual’s name and the amount to be paid listed below the description
        - *Please limit the amount of detail you include.* Each amount listed must be attributed to only one person. Including details regarding specific courses/PD activities, materials, etc. will slow down the process.
    - Semesters included/covered by the charges being invoiced for each individual.
- Please submit one invoice for all applicable candidates with supporting documentation for each attached as one file.
    - *Submitting separate invoices for individual candidates will slow down the process.*

- Before CDE can issue payment, the institution must have an active vendor packet on file with CDE. This includes completed W9 and EFT information

Payment Information

- Payment will be sent directly to the EPP as an EFT with invoice amounts separated and referenced by the invoice number.
- EPPs can invoice CDE without having received payment from the candidate. If the candidate or district has already paid the EPP, a refund should be issued to the candidate or district upon receipt of payment from CDE.
- Payments will be processed after the applicable submission window closes and can take up to four weeks to reach the recipient entity.

How Can I Stay Updated on Program News?

The program webpage will be updated regularly and will always have the most current information. Periodic updates will also be sent via the Educator Talent News e-newsletter. You can subscribe here. Updates regarding specific awards will be sent directly to EPP program contacts. To ensure your program receives these in a timely manner, remember to update CDE about any changes to points of contact via email.