# Alternative Education Campus (AEC) Optional Measures Application Process Guide

**August 2026**

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**How to Use This Process Guide**

This process guide brings together the CDE guidance most relevant to selecting and applying for AEC optional measures and organizes it into a practical submission workflow. It is designed to help districts, authorizers, and AEC leaders identify the appropriate application path, prepare required information, and strengthen proposed measures before submission.

This document does not replace the AEC Accountability Handbook, collection instructions, or other official CDE guidance. When formal requirements, timelines, or policy language are needed, the linked CDE source documents remain controlling.

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# QUICK START GUIDE

## Which path am I on?

Existing, Pre-Approved Measure path:

- Complete the Google Form
- Select the appropriate indicator
- Select the school's chosen optional measures
- Confirm readiness:
  - minimum n-size
  - representativeness
  - alignment to existing cut points
- Submit any additional information requested by CDE

New AEC Optional Measure Application path:

- Complete the Google Form
- Prepare supporting documentation if applicable
- Be ready to provide evidence related to:
  - technical fit
  - student outcomes
  - rigor and validity
  - sufficient variability

## Process Overview

Following submission, CDE reviews materials for eligibility and alignment to rubric criteria. Decisions and feedback are provided, and approved measures are included in the Alternative Education Campus Actual Measures Collection for incorporation into the next AEC SPF.

## What makes a measure approvable?

A strong AEC optional measure:

- aligns clearly to a single AEC SPF indicator
- captures meaningful student outcomes attributable to the AEC
- demonstrates sufficient rigor and technical credibility
- produces variability sufficient to support accountability use

## What are the most common reasons measures are denied?

- does not measure student outcomes
- reflects insufficient/non-representative participation
- duplicates a required or previously approved measure
- cut points are not defined based on norms
- lacks evidence of rigor or validity
- does not provide sufficient variability in results

# OPTIONAL MEASURE GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

## Introduction: Purpose and Context

Optional measures allow Alternative Education Campuses (AECs) to capture meaningful aspects of student performance not reflected in state-required measures, while maintaining alignment to accountability expectations.

This document outlines the optional measure application process and provides guidance on requirements for submission, review, and approval. You can access more information about AECs in the AEC Handbook and on the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) website. The Appendices of this document also include more information about the AEC SPF and optional measures.

## Overview of the AEC Framework

### AEC School Performance Framework (SPF)

The Colorado Alternative Education Campus School Performance Framework (AEC SPF) evaluates all approved AECs on four indicators of student performance: Academic Achievement, Academic Growth, Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness, and Student Engagement. Like traditional schools, AECs receive a plan type assignment of Performance, Improvement, Priority Improvement, Turnaround, or Insufficient State Data.

Within these performance indicators, AECs are accountable for many of the same measures and metrics as traditional schools, but the cut-points have been adjusted to be more appropriate for AEC student populations. AEC SPFs also include some alternate measures (e.g., best-of completion rate) for all schools and allow districts/authorizers to submit supplemental optional measures for inclusion once approved by CDE. The AEC optional measures submission process is detailed in this guidance document.

### Accountability Implications

The AEC SPF provides a structured framework to:

- differentiate performance across AECs, identifying schools in need of additional support and highlighting effective practices
- capture academic performance data for students not represented in traditional accountability measures, particularly students in grades 11 and 12
- establish AEC-specific benchmarks for state-required measures using statewide AEC data
- promote a shared understanding of performance expectations across AECs using common measures
- provide an overall performance rating that supports communication with stakeholders, districts, and authorizers

**State-Required Indicators and Measures**

Each of the performance indicators are weighted and include measures, metrics, and cut-points that are required by CDE where sufficient data exist at the school. The table below summarizes the weights and state-required measures for each performance indicator. CDE reserves the right to remove or change measures, required or optional, as needed to assure the integrity and quality of school evaluations.

**Performance Indicators**

| Performance Indicator | Weight | State-Required Measures |
|---|---|---|
| Academic Achievement | 15% | • CMAS mean scale score - English Language Arts, Math<br>• CMAS Science mean scale score<br>• PSAT mean scale score - Reading & Writing, Math |
| Academic Growth | 35% | • Median growth percentiles - English Language Arts/Reading & Writing, Math |
| Postsecondary & Workforce Readiness | 30% | • Best-Of Completion Rate<br>• Dropout rate<br>• SAT mean scale score - Reading & Writing, Math |
| Student Engagement | 20% | • Attendance Rate<br>• Truancy Rate |

** For schools without PWR, serving only grades K-8, the weights are slightly different

## How Optional Measures Fit into the AEC SPF

Districts/authorizers may request CDE review and include optional measures within each of the performance indicators on its AEC SPF reports. At a minimum, the optional measures must:

- Fall under one of performance indicators that are in the AEC SPF;
- Meet the criteria outlined below in guiding principles.

**Request to Reconsider Process for AECs**

While AECs are eligible to participate in the Request to Reconsider process, AECs cannot submit local data or measures for inclusion through the Body of Evidence condition.

***UPDATED SPRING 2026*** **Guiding Principles for Approving AEC Optional Measures**

An AEC Workgroup was conducted during spring of the 2024-25 school year to improve how AECs are supported and held accountable for performance. The Workgroup's purposes were to 1) review current AEC framework plan type distributions and framework cuts, 2) review the process for approving optional accountability measures, 3) review the process for measuring schools' progress toward those optional measures, and 4) explore methods to determine the validity, quality, and equity of optional measures

across the AEC landscape. As a result of that workgroup, the following principles were established to define an approvable optional measure for inclusion in a school's AEC SPF framework (full language of the principles can be found in Appendix C):

1. Optional measure is a technical fit with performance frameworks
2. Optional measure uses student outcome/performance data
3. Optional measure establishes rigor and validity needed for accountability use
4. Optional measure demonstrates sufficient variability in performance to justify use in a normative accountability system

**District/Authorizer Responsibilities**

Districts/authorizers are responsible for creating a process with their AEC schools to review and select appropriate supplemental optional measures, and for reporting accurate and complete results to CDE. Where the selected optional measure requires a school or its district/authorizer to gather data that is not otherwise routinely submitted to CDE, the district/authorizer and/or AEC is responsible for the cost of gathering such data. The district/authorizer must gather data reliably and must describe in their submission the methods used to generate the data. This data is also subject to CDE monitoring.

## Types of Optional Measure Submissions

The Actual Measures collection is the current process whereby CDE accepts and incorporates local measure data into the AEC SPFs for both schools with an AEC designation already in place, and schools that are receiving an AEC designation for the first time. There are two components of this process, the New Optional Measure Application and the Alternative Education Campus Actual Measures Collection.

**New Process Starting for the 2027 AEC SPF - New Optional Measure Application**

The Optional Measures Negotiation process and Planned Measures Collection have been merged into a single New Optional Measure Application. This update was made in alignment with recommendations from the 2024-25 AEC stakeholder workgroup to provide better responses, more transparency, and ensure that measures are normed appropriately across all AECs. **If a district/authorizer would like to use a new optional measure on their AEC SPF, they must engage in this process.**

While there is one main application, schools can submit new measures in two tracks:

1. **EXISTING AEC SPF MEASURES (Measures that have been previously approved by CDE for other AECs).**
    a. These include measures that are new to an AEC, or that haven't been used at that school within the last three SPF cycles
2. **PREVIOUSLY UNUSED AEC SPF MEASURES (Measures that haven't been approved by CDE)**
    a. These measures require a more detailed application process that is aligned to the New Optional Measure Rubric (Appendix A) that is broken down into the four guiding principles described in this guide.

Please note that any measure that a school has not used within the last three SPF cycles is defined as new and must be included in an application.

**For the 2026-27 school year, there is a transition to an extended timeline for new measure submissions.**
In the fall of 2026 (October-December), CDE will open the application process for new optional measure negotiations for the 2027 AEC SPF.

In the winter of 2027 (January-March), CDE will open the new optional measure application process for the 2028 AEC SPF. CDE anticipates that this extended measure identification window (i.e., having AECs request and gain approval a year in advance of measure usage) will be used for collection going forward after the 2026-27 school year.

Both tracks above fall under one application process using the New Optional Measure Application that is split based on which track your proposed measure falls under. For existing AEC SPF measures, districts/authorizers will be able to select the already-approved measures, broken down by indicator. Districts/authorizers may submit calculation, student population, or cut point modifications for these already-approved measures with sufficient justification.

For measures that have not been approved by CDE yet, districts/authorizers will be asked to provide more information around technical fit, student outcome/performance data, rigor and validity, and sufficient variability. Clearly defined qualifications as of 2026 to be considered a new measure include:

- must be quantitative data
- must be student outcome-based data
- must be attributable to the current AEC
- must have sufficient participation (e.g., ~75% of eligible students)
- must have defined cut points
- must demonstrate potential variability

## Designing a Strong Optional Measure

The optional measure submission process is aligned with the New Optional Measure Rubric (Appendix A). The rubric focuses on the four main areas noted by the 2024-25 workgroup. Guidance in this section is to provide more insight into what the Colorado Department of Education is looking for and what information districts/authorizers will need to provide for measure approval.

### *1. Technical Fit with Performance Frameworks*

Measures must demonstrate alignment to the following criteria:

- Does the measure fit cleanly within the AEC performance framework structure?
- Is the measure quantitative and compatible with Data Pipeline submission requirements?

- Does the measure provide new, non-duplicative information that is not already captured by existing required or approved measures?

**Districts/authorizers will need to provide:**

| Technical Fit Component | Evidence Required in the Application |
|---|---|
| Indicator Alignment | ● Identification of the performance framework indicator<br>○ Academic Achievement<br>○ Academic Growth<br>○ Student Engagement<br>○ Postsecondary & Workforce Readiness<br>● Explanation of how the measure fits within the selected indicator<br>○ What aspects of performance are being captured? |
| Quantitative Data & Submission Feasibility | ● Confirmation that the measure produces quantitative (numerical) data<br>● Confirmation that the data can be submitted through Data Pipeline |
| Non-Duplication of Existing Measure | ● Description of how this measure provides new information not already represented by:<br>○ State-required measures<br>○ Currently-approved optional measures |
| Relationship to Existing Measures | ● Confirmation that the measure:<br>○ Does not replicate a state-required measure<br>○ Does not propose a modified calculation of an already approved measure with the intention of replacing it |
| Data Source Clarity | ● Identification of data source (assessment, system, etc.)<br>○ Is this data already used elsewhere in the framework? |

### *2. Student Outcome Integrity*

Measures must demonstrate alignment to the following criteria:

- Does the measure assess student outcomes or performance?
- Are outcomes attributable to the AEC, based on student experiences during enrollment?
- Is the measure representative of the school's student population?
- Does the district/authorizer demonstrate a clear and feasible plan for achieving strong participation (generally ≥75% of eligible students)?

**Districts/authorizers will need to provide:**

| Student Outcome Component | Evidence Required in the Application |
|---|---|
| Student Outcome | ● Clear description of the student outcome being measured<br>○ What skill, behavior, or result is being assessed |
| Attribution to Current AEC | ● Confirmation that the data reflects student outcomes during enrollment at the current AEC<br>● Explanation of how the AEC influences the measured outcome |
| Population(s) Included | ● Definition of the student group (e.g., all students, grade band, subgroup)<br>● Rationale if not inclusive of the full student population |
| Student Coverage | ● Percentage of total student population included in the measure<br>● Justification if coverage is below a strong majority (e.g., <75% of eligible students) |
| Participation Rate | ● Percentage of eligible students who are anticipated to participate in the assessment or measure<br>● Explanation of implementation plan |
| Data Source Validation | ● Explanation of how data is generated and the student component of data collection, reporting, etc. |

### *3. Rigor and Validity for Accountability Use*

Measures must demonstrate alignment to the following criteria:

- Is the measure technically stable and appropriate for accountability use?
- Is the measure aligned to Colorado Academic Standards where applicable?
- Are performance expectations normed or benchmarked appropriately?
- Is there evidence supporting the rigor and validity of the measure?

**Districts/authorizers will need to provide:**

| Rigor & Validity Component | Evidence Required in the Application |
|---|---|
| Measure Type and Norming | ● Description of clear, defensible, and established cut points<br>○ Description of the norming approach (nationally normed, state normed, locally normed with justification)<br>○ Rationale for how performance levels/thresholds are defined |
| Standards Alignment (Required for Academic | ● Description of alignment to Colorado Academic Standards<br>○ Content area |

| | |
|---|---|
| Measures Only) | ○ Skills or standards assessed<br>○ Grade-level expectations |
| Technical Specifications | ● Description or documentation of technical specifications (more detail in Data and Technical Requirements) |
| Validity Evidence | ● Evidence supporting that the measure accurately assesses the intended outcomes, including:<br>○ External validation (vendor or national research)<br>○ Internal validation (district/authorizer analysis or studies)<br>○ Prior use in accountability or evaluation systems |
| Reliability and Data Quality | ● Explanation of how consistency is ensured:<br>○ Standardized scoring processes<br>○ Use of rubrics or defined criteria<br>○ Training or calibration (if human scoring is involved) |
| Ongoing Validity | ● Acknowledgment that measures may be reviewed periodically for continued rigor and validity<br>● Description of how measure quality will be monitored over time |

### *4. Sufficient Variability for Accountability*

Measures must demonstrate alignment to the following criteria:

- Does the measure produce sufficient variation in performance across students and schools?
- Is it possible for both students and schools to perform across all rating levels, including "does not meet"?
- Do cut points enable meaningful differentiation in performance?

**Districts/authorizers will need to provide:**

| Sufficient Variability Component | Evidence Required in the Application |
|---|---|
| Performance Variability | ● Confirmation that the measure produces a range of outcomes across students<br>● Explanation if variability is limited |
| Ability to Differentiate Performance | ● Confirmation that<br>○ Students can perform at all levels (including lowest category)<br>○ Schools can receive any performance rating<br>● Confirmation that all four rating categories are<br>○ Defined<br>○ Represented in the data (or are expected to be) |

| | |
|---|---|
| Cut Point Methodology | ● Rationale for how cut points reflect meaningful differences in performance |
| Distribution of Results | ● Expected distribution of results across performance levels OR historical data if available |
| Comparability and Stability | ● Description of how the measure supports<br>○ Comparison across schools, and/or<br>○ Comparison across years within a school |
| Ongoing Variability Review | ● Acknowledgement that variability may be reviewed annually<br>● Understanding that cut points may be adjusted to maintain rigor |

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**Technical Specifications to Prepare**

To ensure that optional measures are clearly defined, consistently calculated, and technically feasible for inclusion in the AEC SPF, submissions must include sufficient detail to support accurate calculation, validation, and Data Pipeline submission.

| Data/Technical Component | Evidence Required in the Application |
|---|---|
| Measure calculation definition | ● Clear calculation formula including<br>○ Numerator<br>○ Denominator<br>○ Any scaling (e.g., per 100 students) |
| Source of data | ● E.g., vendor assessment, district/authorizer system, CDE dataset, survey<br>● Who is generating the data<br>○ E.g., automated system, staff-entered, external provider<br>○ *Measures relying on subjective or staff-entered data may want to include additional reliability safeguards |
| Data collection and administration | ● How often is the measure collected (*annually, multiple times a year)*<br>● Administration process<br>○ Who administers<br>○ Conditions for inclusion in the measure definition |
| Student eligibility rules | ● Define which students are included in the measure<br>○ *Enrollment requirements; subgroup definitions*<br>● Exclusion rules |

| | |
|---|---|
| | ○ *Incomplete data; insufficient enrollment durations* |
| Data aggregation and structure | ● How data is aggregated<br>○ *Student level; school level*<br>● Timeframe of the data<br>○ *Single year; multi-year* |
| Data quality | ● How accuracy is ensured<br>○ Verification process; data cleaning steps<br>○ If human scoring, include inter-rater reliability approach |
| Alignment to Data Pipeline | ● Confirmation that data can be submitted in numerical format<br>● What data elements are required<br>○ *Student ID; score/value; date/timeframe* |
| Norming and comparison | ● What the measure is compared against<br>○ *National norms; state distributions; local benchmarks* |

**Cut Points and Performance Levels**

Cut points define how results from an optional measure are translated into the four performance categories used in the AEC SPF: Exceeds, Meets, Approaching, and Does Not Meet. These thresholds determine how performance is categorized and interpreted at the school level.

Cut points are a critical component of an optional measure and are considered within the overall evaluation of the measure, particularly in relation to rigor, validity, and the ability to differentiate performance. Districts and authorizers must clearly define proposed cut points, provide a defensible rationale, and demonstrate that the measure supports meaningful differentiation in performance.

For new optional measures, districts and authorizers are not expected to have complete performance data at the time of submission. However, they are expected to clearly define proposed cut points, provide a rationale for how those thresholds were established, and demonstrate that the measure is designed to differentiate performance.

Identifying Cut Points for a New Measure

When developing a new optional measure, cut points should be established using available information and professional judgment. The goal is to define thresholds that are clear, reasonable, and aligned to what meaningful performance looks like for the students being served. The following approaches may be used to establish cut points:

| Approach | When to Use | What to Do | Example |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Use existing benchmarks or standards** | When the measure is based on an assessment or program with defined performance levels | Use established thresholds and explain how they apply to your student population | • National or vendor-defined performance levels<br>• State or district benchmarks<br>• Established program expectations (for example, completion requirements or proficiency thresholds) |
| **Use historical or local data** | When prior data exists for this or a similar measure | Review past performance and use ranges or percentiles to define thresholds | • Identify typical performance ranges based on past results<br>• Use percentiles or distribution ranges to define thresholds<br>• Consider what has historically represented strong, typical, and low performance |
| **Use a logical progression of performance levels** | When benchmarks or historical data are not available | Define what “strong,” “typical,” and “low” performance look like and assign thresholds accordingly | • What does strong performance look like for this measure?<br>• What would indicate that a student or school is meeting expectations?<br>• What would suggest that performance is below expectations? |

When historical data is available, percentiles can be used to help inform the development of cut points. Percentiles describe how student performance compares within a distribution and can be used to identify meaningful thresholds between performance levels. In the AEC SPF, many state-required and pre-approved optional measures use percentile-based approaches to establish performance expectations. For example:

- Academic Growth measures reference the 35th, 50th, and 65th percentiles to distinguish performance levels
- Achievement, Student Engagement, and Postsecondary & Workforce Readiness measures often reference the 25th, 50th, and 75th percentiles

| Percentile Range | Interpretation | Potential Performance Level |
|---|---|---|
| 75th+ percentile | Highest levels of performance | Exceeds |
| 50th–74th percentile | Above expected performance | Meets |
| 25th–49th percentile | Typical or expected performance | Approaching |
| Below 25th percentile | Below expected performance | Does Not Meet |

This table illustrates how percentiles can be used to identify thresholds that separate performance levels. Percentiles should be used as a guide to support decision-making, alongside professional judgment and knowledge of the student population. Final cut points should reflect both the distribution of local data and the intended meaning of each performance category.

**Example: Establishing Cut Points Using Prior Year Data**

The example below illustrates how a school or district might use prior year data to establish cut points for a new optional measure.

**Step 1. Define the measure**

The school is proposing a measure that tracks: *Student progress toward on-time graduation, based on the number of credits earned relative to expected pace. This measure reflects whether students are making sufficient progress to graduate on time based on their grade level or individualized plan.*

**Step 2. Gather prior year data**

The school reviews prior year data for its student population, including:

- total credits earned by each student
- expected credits based on grade level or graduation plan

**Step 3. Calculate percent of expected credits earned**

To calculate this measure, the school compares the number of credits each student earned to the number of credits they were expected to earn.

Credits Earned ÷ Expected Credits = Percent of Expected Credits Earned

Example: This calculation is applied to each student to determine individual performance relative to expected credit accumulation. The results are then grouped to understand overall performance patterns.

| | Credits Earned | Expected Credits | Percent of Expected Credits Earned |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Student A** | 6 | 6 | 100% |
| **Student B** | 5 | 6 | 83% |
| **Student C** | 3 | 6 | 50% |
| **Student D** | 2 | 6 | 33% |

**Step 4. Review distribution and identify groupings**

After calculating results for all students, the school reviews the distribution and identifies approximate percentile ranges.

Example distribution:

| Percent of Expected Credits Earned | Percentile Range | Percent of Students |
|---|---|---|
| **85% or more** | **top 10% (~75th-99th percentile)** | 18% |
| **70–84%** | **middle-high (~50th-74th percentile)** | 32% |
| **40–69%** | **middle (~25th-49th percentile)** | 30% |
| **Below 40%** | **lower (~below 25th percentile)** | 20% |

The school reviews the distribution to understand how student performance is spread across levels.

- students fully on track or exceeding expectations
- students close to expected pace
- students making partial progress
- students significantly behind

**Step 5. Identify threshold ranges based on data and performance expectations**

The school uses the distribution of results to identify threshold ranges that reflect meaningful differences in performance. This includes:

- reviewing where results cluster
- identifying meaningful differences in performance
- defining what each performance level represents (for example, on track, close to on track, or significantly behind)

In this example:

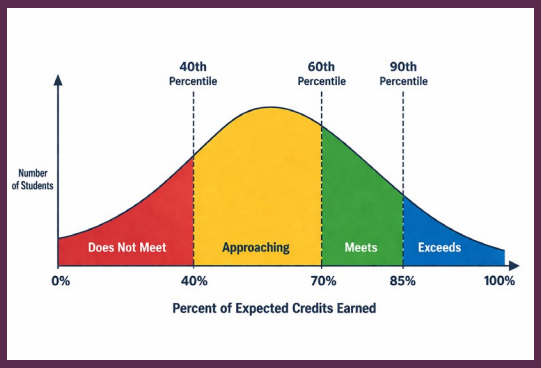
- Students above approximately the **90th percentile** represent the highest levels of performance
- Students between approximately the **60th and 90th percentiles** represent students meeting expectations
- Students between approximately the **40th and 60th percentiles** represent students approaching expectations
- Students below approximately the **40th percentile** represent students performing below expectations

These reference points are used to define threshold ranges that align both to the distribution of data and to the intended meaning of each performance level.

**Step 6. Establish cut points**

Using this distribution, the school defines the following performance levels:

| Performance Level | Definition |
|---|---|
| **Exceeds** | >85% of expected credits earned |
| **Meets** | 70%-84% of expected credits earned |
| **Approaching** | 40%-69% of expected credits earned |
| **Does Not Meet** | Below 40% of expected credits earned |




**Step 7. Explain the rationale**

The school provides the following justification:

- Cut points reflect the distribution of prior year data and approximate percentile groupings
- Thresholds are informed by percentile-based approaches used in the AEC SPF for state-required measures
- Each category represents a meaningful difference in student progress toward graduation
- The structure supports differentiation across performance levels while remaining appropriate for the AEC population

**Step 8. Check for variability**

The school confirms that:

- students are distributed across performance levels
- results are not concentrated in a single category
- thresholds allow for meaningful differentiation

**Step 9. Plan for ongoing review**

The school notes that:

- cut points are based on prior year data and may be adjusted
- future results will be reviewed to ensure continued differentiation
- adjustments may be made if results become concentrated or do not reflect meaningful differences

Avoid:

- thresholds that are too narrow
- thresholds that result in little variation across performance levels
- thresholds that make it difficult for students or schools to fall into lower performance levels

Well-defined cut points strengthen the usefulness of the measure for both accountability and improvement purposes.

**Before You Submit**

**District/Authorizer Responsibilities**

Districts/authorizers are responsible for creating a process with their AEC schools to review and select appropriate supplemental optional measures, and for reporting accurate and complete results to CDE. Where the selected optional measure requires a school or its district/authorizer to gather data that is not otherwise routinely submitted to CDE, the district/authorizer and/or AEC is responsible for the cost of gathering such data. The district/authorizer must gather data reliably and must describe in their submission the methods used to generate the data. This data is also subject to CDE monitoring.

**Step-by-Step Submission Process**

1. Districts and authorizers should begin by reviewing the Calculation Guidance for Alternative Education Campuses and the AEC SPF Flat File to identify available optional measures aligned to the school's model and mission. Districts/authorizers and schools can apply to use the already-available measures that fit the school's model and mission. These documents also show examples of what types of optional measures are submitted under each indicator.
2. Beginning in October 2026, the New Optional Measure Application opens, and districts/authorizers indicate intent to use any new optional measures on their AEC SPF (defined as any measure that a school has not used within the last three SPF cycles).
3. Submit the application for **each new measure** (whether existing AEC SPF measures that have previously been approved by CDE but not currently in use at the school AND/OR previously unused AEC SPF measures that haven't been approved by CDE yet).
    a. The submission timeline for the 2027 AEC SPF will be October-December. The submission timeline for 2028 (and moving forward) will be January-March.
4. CDE will review the request and provide final approval/denial for the current application cycle. The review will be conducted by a cross-unit CDE team. CDE staff will evaluate the extent to which the application meets the conditions and criteria outlined in Appendix A (the Optional Measure Rubric) and whether the supporting documents support approval.
    a. APPENDIX D describes examples of approvable or deniable measures with sample rationale
5. CDE notifies districts/authorizers by December 15, 2026 with approval or denial of the submitted proposed measures.

a. CDE will provide rationale if a measure is denied (e.g., issues with validity, lack of supporting documentation, adherence to guiding principles).
    i. Rubric-aligned feedback
    ii. Specific reasons for denial
    iii. Required revisions if applicable, along with resubmission expectations
b. If a new optional measure is denied by CDE, the district/authorizer will receive specific information on the denial and may submit additional data to reassess the following year.
c. Approvals come with a letter that confirms the approval
    i. Conditions of the approval (e.g., must meet participation threshold, must monitor variability, must submit updated data)
    ii. If the measure requires CDE-pulled data, the letter of approval will include confirmation of that, the timeline for that data request, and a contact at CDE for that data pull

6. In May, the Alternative Education Campus Actual Measures Collection opens, and districts/authorizers submit optional measures, including any newly approved optional measures.
    a. *As a note, if the approved optional measure does not have the required conditions (e.g., relevant participation rate or expected), the measure may not be included in the AEC SPF

**Sunsetting Optional Measures**

An optional measure may be considered for sunset under the following conditions:

- The measure does not meet all AEC guiding principles for optional measures (i.e., technical fit, student outcome/performance data, rigor and validity, sufficient variability in performance).
- There has been a lack of consistent use of the measure (e.g., the measure has not been used in 3 years.)
- The methodological approach cannot be maintained year over year.

After the release of preliminary AEC frameworks, CDE will review optional measures currently in use and create a list of sunset measures based on these criteria. CDE will release this list to the field by November. Sunsetting measures will be allowed to be used for a final time during the following year's framework cycle. However, after the next cycle these measures will no longer be available.

Measures flagged for sunset could be re-approved if renegotiated with necessary adjustments to bring them in line with guiding principles. This renegotiation would go through the New Optional Measure Application.

**Re-Norming Optional Measures**

A measure that meets all guiding principles except sufficient variability will be identified for potential cut point re-norming. Rigor of cut points for an existing optional measure will be reviewed every five years.

This prevents cut points from changing every year but allows for consistent and predictable analysis of current cut points. This also allows for time to work with the field if needed to establish new cut points.

After the release of preliminary AEC frameworks, CDE will review optional measures currently in use and create a list of measures flagged for cut point review. CDE will release this list to the field by November. Cut points are then investigated and updated; new cut points are published as soon as they are available.

Measures that have been identified for re-norming will be allowed to be used for a final time with the currently established cut points during the following fall framework cycle. However, after the next cycle these measures will be used with the new cut points only.

## Appendix B: Application Information

Optional Measure Options

Pre-Approved Optional Measure Selection

New Optional Measure Application

## Appendix C: AEC Additional Information - from AEC Handbook

The table below highlights the differences between the AEC SPF and traditional SPF.

**Comparison of Performance Indicators by SPF Type**

| AEC SPF | Traditional SPF |
|---|---|
| Academic Achievement | Academic Achievement* |
| Academic Growth | Academic Growth* |
| Postsecondary & Workforce Readiness | Postsecondary & Workforce Readiness* |
| Student Engagement | ^ |

*Includes disaggregated student groups (i.e., Free/Reduced-Price Lunch Eligible, Minority Students, Multilingual Learners, Students with Disabilities), not included in the AEC SPF.

^ Indicator is only available on the AEC SPF, not included in the Traditional SPF.

The improvement planning expectations and accountability expectations are also the same for AECs as for traditional schools. If a public school is required to implement a Priority Improvement plan or Turnaround plan for five school years, the state board must recommend that the public school's district or authorizer take one of several actions specified in statute regarding the public school. AECs are required to submit their Unified Improvement Plan (UIP) annually, unless they meet biennial flexibility requirements (i.e., Performance plan type).

**Improvement Planning as an AEC**

AECs are encouraged to collaborate with the CDE's School Improvement Planning team (uiphelp@cde.state.co.us) to use the UIP process to leverage data beyond what is included in the school's performance framework.

Each August, CDE produces a traditional School Performance Framework (SPF) report for every eligible school in the state. SPF reports are preliminarily issued to districts/authorizers for all schools, including all AECs. For schools with current AEC status, CDE generates a preliminary AEC SPF report each September. Supplemental optional measure data submitted through Data Pipeline and accepted by CDE are included on the AEC SPF. The reports notify districts/authorizers of an AEC's plan type—Performance, Improvement, Priority Improvement, Turnaround, or Insufficient State Data. AECs are optionally permitted to submit a request to reconsider their plan type, see the section "Note on Alternative Education Campuses" in request to reconsider guidance. Final AEC SPFs are released to districts/authorizers and approved by the state board by December. The table below outlines this process.

**AEC SPF Timeline**

| Month | Action |
|---|---|
| September | **All**: Preliminary AEC SPF released to districts/authorizers (incorporates all state-required measures and optional measures submitted during the Actual Measures Collection) |
| October 15 | **Optional:** Request to Reconsider deadline |
| December | **All:** Final AEC SPF released publicly |

**Cut Points**

The measure-level cut-points for the AEC SPF derive from the baselined normative performance of AECs which can be found in the Calculation Guidance for Alternative Education Campuses. In almost all cases (Median Growth Percentiles are the only measure that differ), state-required cut-points translate into ratings of:

- Does not meet AEC norms: Below the 40th percentile rank compared to AECs statewide
- Approaching AEC norms: 40th - 60th percentile rank compared to AECs statewide
- Meets AEC norms: 60th - 90th percentile rank compared to AECs statewide
- Exceeds AEC norms: At/above 90th percentile rank compared to AECs statewide

For state-required metrics and cut-points, CDE provides the results for each AEC and their AEC percentile rank performance. CDE also provides the AEC SPF Optional Measures Norms and Cut Points Lookup Sheet as a tool for current optional measures, as well as some guidance on appropriate format and processes for additional cut points.

**Flexible Measure Level Weighting**

Measures for the Academic Achievement and Academic Growth indicators are weighted by N size. For measures in these indicators, points eligible are assigned according to the number of students who participated in each measure. Measures where a greater number of students participated are worth comparatively more weight. Optional measures contribute to the N count when calculating measure points possible. The individual weight of each measure in these indicators is derived from: the total points eligible in the indicator (PE), the total number
of students represented in all measures in the indicator (Total N), and the total number of students represented in the measure in question (Measure N):

**Achievement and Growth**

**Measure Points Possible = (Measure N/Total N) x PE**

Measures for the Student Engagement and Postsecondary & Workforce Readiness indicators are not weighted by N size. These measures are apportioned equal weight within their indicators. Optional measures are included in the measure count. The individual weight of each measure in these indicators

is derived from the total points eligible in the indicator (PE) equally divided amongst the measures in that indicator:

**Student Engagement and Postsecondary & Workforce Readiness**

**Measure Points Possible = (PE/Count of Measures)**

Note that due to rounding policies, points eligible at the measure level may not sum up perfectly to the total points eligible at the indicator and overall level as displayed on AEC SPF reports.

**Optional Measure Submission Requirements by Indicator**

| Indicator | Optional Measure Requirements |
|---|---|
| Academic Achievement | ● Must be aligned to academic standards adopted by the local school board or Institute pursuant to C.R.S., §22-7-1013<br>● Reliable and valid interim assessment achievement results, meaning interim assessments that are nationally- or state-normed and are capable of measuring progress on the standards adopted by the local school board or Institute pursuant to C.R.S., §22-7-1013 (e.g., Northwest Evaluation Association's Measures of Academic Progress, Renaissance Learning's STAR assessments, Accuplacer Diagnostic)<br>● If a measure does not have state defined metrics and cut-points, the AEC and its district/authorizer shall submit proposed metrics and cut-points and provide a research-based rationale for the selection of these metrics and cut-points during the New Optional Measure Application process<br>● Must have an N size of at least 16 students<br>● Data can be aggregated over a 3-year time period |
| Academic Growth | ● Measures of student longitudinal academic growth must be consistent with the measures set forth in C.R.S., §22-11-204 (2)<br>● Norm-referenced growth on reliable and valid interim assessments, meaning those interim assessments that are nationally- or state-normed and are capable of measuring progress on the standards adopted by the local school board or Institute pursuant to C.R.S., §22-7-1013.; or<br>● Criterion-referenced growth on reliable and valid interim assessments, meaning those interim assessments that are nationally- or state-normed and are capable of measuring progress on the standards adopted by the local school board or Institute |

| | |
|---|---|
| | pursuant to C.R.S., §22-7-1013<br>● If a measure does not have state defined metrics and cut-points, the AEC and its district/authorizer shall submit proposed metrics and cut-points and provide a research-based rationale for the selection of these metrics and cut-points during the New Optional Measure Application process<br>● Must have an N size of at least 20 students<br>● Data can be aggregated over a 3-year time period |
| Postsecondary & Workforce Readiness | ● Student graduation rate, consistent with the graduation rate defined by the State Board in 1 CCR 301-1;<br>● Transition success rate (required for non-degree granting AECs);<br>● Post-completion success rate;<br>● Performance on workforce readiness assessment (e.g., Work Keys or Accuplacer Placement); and/or<br>● Course/credit completion rate<br>● If a measure does not have state defined metrics and cut-points, the AEC and its district/authorizer shall submit proposed metrics and cut-points and provide a research-based rationale for the selection of these metrics and cut-points during the New Optional Measure Application process<br>● Must have an N size of at least 16 students<br>● Data can be aggregated over a 3-year time period |
| Student Engagement | ● Re-engagement rate, consistent with the re-engagement rate defined by the State Board in 1 CCR 301-84;<br>● Returning student rate; and/or<br>● Pre-and post-scores on reliable, research-based psychosocial instruments reflecting educationally significant psychological, behavioral or attitudinal change in enrolled students<br>● If a measure does not have state defined metrics and cut-points, the AEC and its district/authorizer shall submit proposed metrics and cut-points and provide a research-based rationale for the selection of these metrics and cut-points during the New Optional Measure Application process<br>● Must have an N size of at least 16 students<br>● Data can be aggregated over a 3-year time period |

**2024-25 Workgroup Full Recommendation Language**

**1. Optional measure is a technical fit with performance frameworks**

- Optional measure cleanly fits within existing indicator structure (Appendix C)
- Optional measure uses quantitative data in a way that can be consumed by the frameworks/submitted through Data Pipeline (i.e., in numerical format).
- Optional measure includes data that is not otherwise represented by any state required or currently approved optional measure. Approvable optional measures include (but may not be limited to):
    - Data of non-continuously enrolled students in grades tested by state assessments
    - Data from grades not tested by state assessments
    - Data from a local assessment that has not been approved for use as an optional measure previously.
- Optional measures are not approvable in the following cases (not exhaustive):
    - Uses state assessment data that would otherwise appear on the framework in a state required measure
    - Is a new and potentially more rigorous calculation method of a previously approved and established optional measure assessment (this would replace the previously approved measure)
    - Uses the same local data point from the same student more than twice (used in two separate indicators, not the same indicator) in the same performance framework

**2. Optional measure uses student outcome/performance data**

- Data for optional measure is based on student outcomes or performance at the AEC in question. Non-student data and data from students while at another school or site is not approvable.
- Data for optional measure is broadly representative of the school's overall population
    - Measure should capture as much of the student body as possible (not restricted to a subpopulation or specific grade without strong rationale)
    - Participation in the assessment/measure should represent a large majority of the potential population (e.g., 75% of students eligible for the measure)

**3. Optional measure has established rigor and validity needed for accountability use**

- Academic achievement and growth optional measures are aligned to Colorado Academic Standards
- Academic measures and student engagement survey based optional measures are state or nationally normed. If external norming is not possible, a strong rationale for establishing cuts will be required
- Technical specifications are available for optional measure assessment or instrument
- Validity of optional measure assessment or instrument has been established prior to or during negotiation for use on frameworks
    - All approved optional measures are eligible for review based on validity and rigor; this process may occur annually and could result in changes to individual measures' approval status

**4. Optional measure demonstrates sufficient variability in performance to justify use in a normative accountability system**

- It is possible for both a student and a school to fail an optional measure

- Data is variable enough to establish cut points for all four rating categories (i.e., exceeds, meets, approaching, and does not meet)
- Cut points are established such that there is meaningful differentiation in performance data, including across sites or at a single site across years
    - All approved optional measures are eligible for annual review of variability and may be adjusted to ensure appropriate rigor for use on accountability frameworks

## Appendix D. Example Rationale for Approving/Denying New Optional Measures

This section highlights approvable and not approvable optional measures in alignment with the guiding principles. The rationale is meant to support districts/authorizers and AECs as they complete the district/authorizer narratives for the New Optional Measure Application process.

### Examples of Approvable and Not Approvable Measures for Each Guiding Principle

#### 1. Optional measure is a technical fit with performance frameworks

**Approvable**: Median percentile rank for Achievement for STAR Enterprise

- This measure is approvable because it cleanly fits with the Academic Achievement indicator (i.e., it is a measure of student achievement), it uses quantitative data (i.e., median percentile ranks), and it is not duplicative with any current approved measure (i.e., captures data from STAR - a local assessment that has not yet been approved for use as an optional measure for this AEC).

**Not Approvable:** Qualitative reports on student engagement and school culture

- This measure is not approvable because it does not use quantitative data (i.e., qualitative reports) and therefore cannot be submitted through Data Pipeline or included within the performance framework structure. In this instance, this data could be better served as a part of the data narrative within the Unified Improvement Plan.

#### 2. Optional measure uses student outcome/performance data

**Approvable:** Student re-enrollment rates based on population of eligible students for non-transition schools

- This measure is approvable because it is based on student outcomes for that AEC (i.e., student re-enrollment at the AEC) and captures as much of the student population as possible (i.e., all eligible students).

**Not Approvable**: Attendance change rates from students' previous schools compared to current school

- This measure is not approvable because it is based on student outcomes from students while at another school.

### 3. Optional measure has established rigor and validity needed for accountability use

**Approvable**: NWEA MAP Conditional Growth Percentiles

- This measure is approvable because it is nationally normed, technical specifications are available for the measure, and validity of the measure has previously been established for use on the frameworks. See the Optional Measure Cut Point Lookup Document.

**Not Approvable**: Locally developed content assessments with little established internal or external validity

- This measure is not approvable because it is unclear whether the locally developed content assessments are aligned to Colorado Academic Standards or state/national norms and the validity has not been established prior to use on the frameworks. High-level considerations for using local assessments are to determine if there is alignment to norms at the state or district/authorizer level, if the assessment is compared to other students or assessing mastery of specific skills or knowledge, and if the test is appropriate for the grade level and population tested.

### 4. Optional measure demonstrates sufficient variability in performance to justify use in a normative accountability system

**Approvable**: Student discipline rates with district/authorizer-specific cut points

- This measure is approvable because it is possible for a student or school to fail the measure and data is variable enough to establish cut points (i.e., district/authorizer-specific cut points already exist). For this measure, cut points would need to be regularly revisited for rigor.

**Not Approvable**: FAFSA completion rate for a school that requires all students to complete a FAFSA application

- This measure is not approvable because it is not possible to fail the measure (i.e., all students are required to complete a FAFSA) and, because of this, the data is not variable enough to establish cut points for all four rating categories.

**Other Examples of Not Approvable Measures and Associated Rationale**

**Student Engagement Survey:** A school serving students with significant special needs requested a student engagement measure based on a national life skills survey. The survey was given by staff and staff provided the answers. The survey was largely based on life skills successfully gained by the students. These life skills included balancing a checkbook, self care, accessing transportation etc. We were unable to approve this survey because the school did not have a rubric for success in these areas, there were concerns with inter-rater reliability, and the data was provided by the staff, not the students, so it was unclear if the measure was appropriately student driven.

**ICAP Completion/Portfolio Completion**: ICAP completion is a graduation requirement in Colorado. Unless the progress toward ICAP completion is being tracked by all students in a credit earning course with a sole focus on ICAP that can be passed/failed, this measure is hard to approve and is likely more appropriate to use the measure to track graduation requirements instead.

**PWR Measure**: A school requested a measure based on work based education and skills. Students were all involved in internships or apprenticeship programs. The measurement and progress would be completed by supervisors in the workplace. This measure was unable to be approved based on inter-rater reliability, no norms across workplaces, and overall concerns with how data is generated and measured.

### Common Mistakes

Common issues that result in denial of optional measure applications include:

- measures that do not assess student outcomes
- insufficient or non-representative participation
- lack of variability in performance results
- absence of clearly defined cut points
- duplication of existing required or approved measures