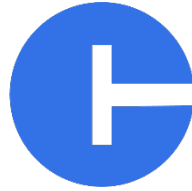


**Connecticut State Department of Education
Turnaround Office**



CONNECTICUT
Education

**Request for Proposal (RFP) 820
1003 School Improvement Grant (SIG) Application**

**Charlene M. Russell-Tucker
Commissioner of Education**

**Application Issue Date: Monday, June 8, 2026
Application Due Date: Friday, July 31, 2026**

SIG 1003 | Table of Contents

PART I: 1003 SIG Application Instructions	Page 3
A. Submission Instructions	3
B. Timeline Summary	3
C. Questions	3
PART II: 1003 SIG Overview	Page 4
A. 1003 SIG Overview	4
B. Eligible Schools	4
C. 1003 SIG Award Selection Criteria	4
D. CSDE Turnaround Framework	4
E. Requirement for Evidence-Based Interventions	5
F. Modifications and Annual Renewal	6
PART III: 1003 SIG Application and Budget Instructions	Page 7
A. eGMS ESSA SIG Competitive Application	7
B. Budget Proposal	8
C. Submitting the Application in eGMS	9
PART IV: Appendices	Page 10
A. Appendix A: List of Eligible Schools	10
B. Appendix B: 1003 School Improvement Grant Application Scoring Rubric	12

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Attorney Louis Todisco

Connecticut State Department of Education
By Mail: 450 Columbus Blvd., Suite 505 | Hartford, CT 06103-1841
By Telephone: 860-713-6594; By Email: louis.todisco@ct.gov

Freedom of Information:

Pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) Section 1-210 et seq. (FOIA), all questions and responses to this RFP are considered public records and every person shall have the right to (1) inspect such records promptly during regular office or business hours; (2) copy such records in accordance with C.G.S. Section 1-212(g); or (3) receive a copy of such records in accordance with C.G.S. Section 1-212.

PART I: 1003 SIG APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

A. Submission Instructions

Review and follow all directions carefully when completing the 1003 SIG application. All applications must be submitted via email to Amanda Baksa at amanda.baksa@ct.gov. **All applications must be received by 11:59 PM on Friday, July 31, 2026.** Please note that all applications become the property of the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) and are subject to disclosure pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Once applications are approved by CSDE, districts will then upload the application through the eGrants Management System (eGMS). Complete all of the required components. The application will be deemed incomplete and not rated if required components are not submitted. Completed applications in the eGMS must include the following:

Required Components:
School Selection
District Application and Assurances
School Plan
Budget Proposal

B. Timeline Summary

Process	Date
1. CSDE releases 1003 SIG application to districts with eligible schools	June 8, 2026
2. Districts submit 1003 SIG applications via eGMS.	July 31, 2026
3. CSDE approves plan and awards 1003 SIG funds to districts.	September 2026

C. Questions

All questions regarding 1003 SIG should be directed to:

Amanda Baksa, Associate Education Consultant, CSDE | E-mail: amanda.baksa@ct.gov

PART II: SIG 1003 OVERVIEW

A. 1003 SIG Overview

Title I, Part A, Section 1003 SIG authorized under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015, provides states and districts with funds to leverage change and turn around chronically underperforming schools. The CSDE anticipates identifying its third cohort of ESSA 1003 SIG schools through a competitive grant process. For this third cohort, approximately \$2.3 million in 1003 SIG funds are available for competition for the 2026-27 school year. The district may apply for awards with a minimum of \$50,000 per year for eligible Focus schools and a minimum of \$200,000 per year for eligible Title I-identified Turnaround schools. No school may be awarded more than \$500,000 per year.

While this application is for a one-year school improvement plan aligned to the 2026–27 school year, awarded funds under Section 1003 of ESSA will remain available for use through September 30, 2028, consistent with federal Tydings Amendment guidelines. Districts must obligate funds according to their Year 1 plan. Up to 20% of unspent funds may be carried over into the following year to support sustainability and continued implementation. Carryover is tracked annually, and schools may request an exception above the 20% threshold no more than once every three years.

B. Eligible Schools

States must give priority in awarding 1003 SIG funds to districts that demonstrate the greatest need for the funds and the strongest commitment to use the funds to substantially raise the achievement of students attending the persistently lowest-achieving schools. Connecticut schools that are eligible to participate in the SIG program are schools designated as either Turnaround or Focus schools identified through the 2024-25 Next Generation Accountability System results. A complete list of eligible schools can be found in Appendix A.

C. 1003 SIG Award Selection Criteria

Using Appendix B: The 1003 School Improvement Grant District Application Rubric, a selection committee will review and score all applications that meet the minimum submission requirements:

1. School for which the application is submitted must be an eligible Focus or Title I-identified Turnaround School.
2. A completed application must be submitted via eGMS by Friday, July 31, 2026, at 11:59 p.m.

All awards are subject to the availability of funds. Grants are not final until the award letter is executed. Given the number of eligible applicants, the CSDE anticipates a highly competitive process resulting in funding being awarded to only those applicants submitting well-developed applications and transformative plans that directly focus on the reason for their designation.

D. CSDE Turnaround Framework

All 1003 School Improvement Grant (SIG) plans must articulate comprehensive, evidence-based strategies across four critical domains identified by the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) Turnaround Office: **(1) Talent, (2) Academics, (3) Culture and Climate, and (4) Operations**. These strategies must adhere to federal requirements, ensuring that only interventions supported by strong, moderate, or promising evidence are eligible for 1003 SIG funding.

The funded school is committed to making targeted, transformative investments in the following key areas:

- **Talent:** Implement robust systems for recruiting, hiring, developing, evaluating, and retaining high-quality school leaders, educators, and support personnel to build and sustain instructional excellence.
- **Academics:** Develop and execute a rigorous, standards-aligned academic program that is engaging, culturally responsive, and designed to ensure that all students reach high levels of academic achievement.
- **Culture and Climate:** Cultivate a safe, inclusive, and supportive school environment that promotes student well-being, elevates instructional quality, and strengthens partnerships with families and the broader community.
- **Operations:** Establish efficient and effective operational structures that optimize the use of time, staffing, and financial resources to support instructional priorities and long-term sustainability.



In cases where implementation of the SIG plan affects provisions within existing collective bargaining agreements for administrators or teachers, all necessary negotiations will be conducted in accordance with applicable contractual obligations.

If the SIG plan impacts elements of the collective bargaining agreements applicable to the administrators and teachers employed by the local board of education, such provisions must be negotiated in accordance with existing contracts.

E. Requirement for Evidence-Based Interventions

Under ESEA, as amended by ESSA, states must identify two types of low-performing schools:

- *Targeted support and improvement (TSI)* schools, which are schools with one or more consistently underperforming subgroups.¹ In Connecticut, these schools are referred to as Focus schools.
- *Comprehensive support and improvement (CSI)* schools, known in Connecticut as Turnaround schools, which include:
 - the lowest-performing five percent of Title I schools in the state;
 - any public high school failing to graduate one-third or more of its students; and
 - Title I schools with a consistently underperforming subgroup that, on its own, is performing as poorly as students in the lowest-performing five percent of Title I schools, and that has failed to improve after the school has implemented a targeted support and improvement plan.²

Focus and Turnaround schools³ must develop plans for improving student outcomes that (among other things):

- are informed by all the indicators for differentiating schools listed above;
- include evidence-based interventions (see box below); and
- are based on an assessment of the school's needs.⁴

¹ ESSA, Section 1111(c)(4)(C)(iii) and Section 1111(d)(2). ESSA does not define what it means to be consistently underperforming but rather leaves it for states to define.

² ESSA, Section 1111(c)(4)(D).

³ For CSI (Turnaround) schools, the Local Education Agency (LEA) develops the plan, which must be approved by the school. ESSA, Section 1111(d)(1)(B).

⁴ ESSA, Section 1111(d)(1)(B) and Section 1111(d)(2)(B).

Definition of “Evidence-Based” in ESSA

Evidence-based means an activity, strategy, or intervention that:

- i. demonstrates a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes or other relevant outcomes based on
 - (I) strong evidence from at least one well-designed and well-implemented experimental study;
 - (II) moderate evidence from at least one well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental study; or
 - (III) promising evidence from at least one well-designed and well-implemented correlational study with statistical controls for selection bias; or
- ii. (IV) demonstrates a rationale based on high-quality research findings or positive evaluation that such activity, strategy, or intervention is likely to improve student outcomes or other relevant outcomes; and (II) includes ongoing efforts to examine the effects of such activity, strategy, or intervention.

Section 1003 funds can only be used to support activities that meet ESSA’s top three tiers of evidence. In other words, Section 1003 funds can only be used to fund activities, strategies, or interventions based on a study that demonstrates the activity, strategy, or intervention has a *statistically significant effect* on improving student outcomes.⁵ While Focus and Turnaround schools must implement evidence-based interventions under ESSA’s school improvement requirements, this requirement does not directly affect their use of Title I, Part A funds under ESSA.

F. Modifications and Annual Renewal

The CSDE must evaluate annually if the district is eligible to have their 1003 SIG application renewed. The Commissioner or his/her designee may, on the basis of such review, address with district and school leadership a lack of sufficient progress or other implementation issues at the school. If the school does not enact changes or the changes are unlikely to result in sufficient progress or adequately address implementation concerns, the Commissioner may take appropriate actions to ensure sufficient progress at the school, including, but not limited to, developing a revised 1003 SIG Plan.

Additionally, the schools must demonstrate progress with regard to the following indicators:

- school classification/rating;
- discipline incidents;
- dropout rate;
- student chronic absenteeism rate;
- progress on student achievement on assessments for both regular education and high needs subgroups;
- progress on student growth on assessments in Grades 3 through 8 for both regular education and high needs subgroups;
- number and percentage of students completing advanced coursework, early-college high schools, or dual enrollment classes (high school only);
- four-year and six-year cohort graduation rate (high school only); and
- teacher attendance rate.

⁵ ESSA, Section 8101(21)(B) stating:

(B) DEFINITION FOR SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES FUNDED UNDER THIS ACT. When used with respect to interventions or improvement activities or strategies funded under section 1003, the term “evidence-based” means a State, local educational agency, or school activity, strategy, or intervention that meets the requirements of subclause (I), (II), or (III) of subparagraph (A)(i).

PART III: 1003 SIG eGMS APPLICATION AND BUDGET INSTRUCTIONS

A. eGMS ESSA SIG Competitive Application

The ESSA SIG Competitive Application and Budget consists of multiple parts, including:

- **School Selection:** The district identifies grant contact information and information about the school(s) for which the district is applying for 1003 SIG funding.
- **District Application:** The district is required to describe its strategy and structure to support school turnaround efforts at the district level, including how external partners will be evaluated. The district's responses to the seven questions on the District Application are limited to 900 characters.
- **School Plan:**
 - **School Data:** After identifying school, district, and fiscal contact information, for each school for which the district is applying for 1003 SIG funding, the district must submit performance targets based upon historic data and [ESSA Milestone targets](#). The application will also ask for a reason for identification, which can be found on [EdSight](#).
 - **Needs Assessment:** Using the linked [Comprehensive Needs Assessment Rubric and User Guide](#), the school in collaboration with the district must complete a needs assessment, identifying the school's level of implementation for each of the talent, academics, culture and climate and operations indicators. In addition to a score, the application also asks for evidence and reasoning. The needs assessment must be completed with stakeholder engagement. Stakeholders are the individuals, groups, and organizations with a legitimate interest in, or who are meaningfully affected by, the decisions and outcomes of a school or district. This includes district and school-level leaders, certified and non-certified staff, parents and guardians, community members, community organizations, and students where appropriate. Genuine stakeholder engagement ensures these voices actively inform and shape decision-making, rather than simply receiving its results.
 - **Significant Strengths, Growth Areas and Resource Inequities:** The school and district must identify significant strengths and growth areas highlighted by the needs assessment and complete a root cause analysis of each of the growth areas. For the purpose of the 1003 SIG grant, the root cause is the basic cause (or causes) that can reasonably be identified that the school/district leadership has control to fix and, when fixed, will prevent (or significantly reduce the likelihood of) the problem's recurrence. Along with the root cause, the school and district must identify resource inequities — the unequal or unfair distribution of resources that creates a disproportionate burden on specific groups. All students must have access to resources necessary for high-quality education, including distribution of quality teaching staff, technology, interventions for students with disabilities and English Learners, access to high-quality curriculum resources, transportation, before- and after-school programming, etc. These growth areas will serve as the school's Priorities in an upcoming section.
 - **Overarching School Improvement Goals:** The school and district must identify two to three "National/State Benchmark" and two to three "Internal Benchmark" school improvement goals to advance the school's reform priorities. Identify specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (S.M.A.R.T.) school improvement goals that are aligned to ESSA targets and local progress monitoring assessments. Overarching school improvement goals must focus on student outcomes, not on adult actions.
 - **Specific Evidence-Based Interventions to Address School Reform Priorities:** Using the previously identified growth areas, the school and district must identify a core set of evidence-based interventions for which the school will use Title I, Part A, Section 1003 SIG

funding. Interventions must be aligned to the identified growth areas and overarching school improvement goals. Summarize the selected interventions and identify a S.M.A.R.T. goal aligned to each intervention. It is not necessary to select strategies for each of the four components of the CSDE Turnaround Framework; interventions should align to identified school reform priorities and to the overarching school improvement goals. Using definitions of evidence-based interventions, the school and district must identify the level of the evidence-based intervention (strong, moderate, promising), the source, and information to substantiate why the intervention is identified at the selected level. To support applicants, the CSDE has compiled resources into [Evidence-Based Guides](#) aligned to the T.A.C.O. Framework.

- **School Budget Proposal:** The school and district must complete a budget proposal for each school using the application budget page and the State’s Uniform Chart of Accounts. See below for more information about completing the school budget proposal.

B. Budget Proposals

Using the application budget page, create a budget proposal outlining new costs associated with the SIG 1003 School Plan. The budget proposal and aligned budget narrative must indicate the amount of 1003 SIG funds requested by the district to:

- implement the selected evidence-based interventions in each school the district commits to serve;
- conduct district-level activities designed to support implementation of the selected evidence-based interventions; and
- support school improvement activities, at the school or district level, for schools the district commits to serve.

The budget request for each school must be of sufficient size and scope to support full and effective implementation of the selected intervention over a one year period. A district may request funds for district-level activities that will support the implementation of school intervention models and must include not less than \$50,000 per year if the school is a Focus school and not less than \$200,000 if the school is a Title I-identified Turnaround School. Schools may not apply for more than \$500,000 per year.

1003 SIG funds **may not** be used to supplant federal and non-federal funds, but only to supplement funding provided to 1003 SIG schools. In particular, a district must continue to provide all funds that would have been provided to the school in the absence of 1003 SIG funds. This requirement applies to all funding related to full implementation, including pre-implementation activities.

Code all expenditures in accordance with the state’s Uniform Chart of Accounts as summarized below.

CODE:	OBJECT:
100	PERSONNEL SERVICES – SALARIES. Amounts paid to both permanent and temporary grantee employees including personnel substituting for those in permanent positions. This includes gross salary for personnel services rendered while on the payroll of the grantees.
200	PERSONNEL SERVICES – EMPLOYEE BENEFITS. Amounts paid by the grantee on behalf of employees; these amounts are not included in the gross salary but are in addition to that amount. Such payments are fringe benefit payments and, while not paid directly to employees, nevertheless are parts of the cost of personnel services.

300	PURCHASED PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL SERVICES. Services, which by their nature can be performed only by persons or firms with specialized skills and knowledge. While a product may or may not result from the transaction, the primary reason for the purchase is the service provided. Included are the services of architects, engineers, auditors, dentists, medical doctors, lawyers, consultants, teachers, accountants, technical assistance support organizations, school
400	PURCHASED PROPERTY SERVICES. Services purchased to operate, repair, maintain, and rent property owned or used by the grantee. Persons other than grantee employees perform these services. While a product may or may not result from the transaction, the primary reason for the purchase is the service provided.
500	OTHER PURCHASED SERVICES. Amounts paid for services rendered by organizations or personnel not on the payroll of the grantee (separate from Professional and Technical Services or Property Services). While a product may or may not result from the transaction, the primary reason for the purchase is the service provided.
600	SUPPLIES. Amounts paid for items that are consumed, worn out, or deteriorated through use; or items that lose their identity through fabrication or incorporation into different or more complex units or substances.
700	PROPERTY. Expenditures for acquiring fixed assets, including land or existing buildings, improvements of grounds, initial equipment, additional equipment, and replacement of equipment. In accordance with the Connecticut State Comptroller's definition equipment, included in this category are all items of equipment (machinery, tools, furniture, vehicles, apparatus, etc.) with a value of over \$5,000.00 and the useful life of more than one year and data processing equipment that has unit price under \$5,000.00 and a useful life of not less than five
800	OTHER OBJECTS. (Miscellaneous Expenditures) Expenditures for goods or services not properly classified in one of the above objects. Included in the category could be expenditures for dues and fees, judgments against a grantee that are not covered by liability insurance, and interest payments on bonds and notes.

C. Submitting the Application

The district must submit the completed application (one for each school) in eGMS no later than Friday, July 31, 2026. The submission indicates that the superintendent has reviewed and approved the application, and the Local Education Agency (LEA) has agreed to follow all regulations. Certifications and Assurances will be completed by the Superintendent at the time of submission.

PART IV: APPENDICES

Appendix A: List of Eligible Schools

District	School	School Classification
Capital Region Education Council (CREC)	Academy of Aerospace and Engineering	Turnaround
CREC	Academy of Computer Science and Engineering (MS)	Turnaround
CREC	Ana Grace Academy of the Arts	Turnaround
Derby	Derby Middle School	Turnaround
Goodwin University Educational Services (GUES)	Riverside Magnet School at Goodwin University	Turnaround
Jumoke Academy Charter	Jumoke Academy	Turnaround
Stamford	Turn of River School	Turnaround
Bloomfield	Carmen Arace Intermediate School	Focus
CREC	Academy of Computer Science and Engineering (HS)	Focus
CREC	Academy of International Studies Elementary School	Focus
CREC	Academy of Science and Innovation	Focus
CREC	Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts High School – Full Day	Focus
Connecticut Technical and Education Career System (CTECS)	A.I. Prince Technical High School	Focus
CTECS	E.C. Goodwin Technical High School	Focus
CTECS	Eli Whitney Technical High School	Focus
CTECS	Howell Cheney Technical High School	Focus
CTECS	J.M. Wright Technical High School	Focus
Derby	Irving School	Focus
Derby	Derby High School	Focus
Lebanon	Lebanon Elementary	Focus

Middletown	Lawrence School	Focus
Naugatuck	City Hill Middle School	Focus
Norwalk	Norwalk High School	Focus
Putnam	Putnam Elementary School	Focus
Stratford	Harry B. Flood Middle School	Focus
The Gilbert School District	The Gilbert School	Focus

APPENDIX B: 1003 SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT GRANT DISTRICT APPLICATION SCORING RUBRIC

1003 SIG applications will be evaluated using the criteria shown below. Each section will be scored from 0 to up to 4 points. Plans can receive up to 30 total possible points. 1003 SIG is a competitive grant; awards and award amounts will be based on the quality and transformative potential of the application.

FY27 School Improvement Grant – Competitive Application Scoring Rubric

School: _____

District: _____

Designation: CSI/Turnaround TSI/Focus (Focus Type: _____)

Reviewer: _____

Pre-Screen (Non-Scored)

- Complete application submitted
 - School Selection
 - District Application
 - School Plan
 - Budget Proposal
- Eligible school (CSI/Turnaround/Title I-identified or TSI/Focus)

Note: If any box is not checked above, the application cannot be accepted or reviewed further.

Competitive SIG Overall Scores

Section	Score	Notes
District Questions	/ 4	
School Data	/ 4	
Needs Assessment	/ 3	
Significant Strengths, Growth Areas, & Resource Inequities	/ 4	
Overarching School Improvement Goals	/4	
Specific Evidence-Based Interventions to Address School Reform Priorities	/4	
School Budget Proposal	/4	
Application Coherence	/3	
GRAND TOTAL	/30	

1. District Questions

Score: ___ /4

- Specificity & Evidence - Responses include concrete examples, data, and clearly defined actions (what, how, who)
- Alignment & Coherence - All sections are internally consistent and clearly connected to identified needs
- Actionability & Accountability - Plans include specific systems, timelines, tools, and responsible staff for implementation and monitoring
- Equity & Sustainability - Resources are strategically aligned to address inequities and sustain outcomes beyond SIG funding

Notes:

2. School Data

Score: ___ /4

- School, district, and fiscal contact information is clearly identified
- Data points are submitted for each school application
- Data points are based on historic data (CT Report Card) and ESSA Milestone targets
- Reason for identification is correctly identified

Notes:

3. Needs Assessment

Score: ___ /3

- A score, evidence, and reasoning are provided for each indicator
- Needs Assessment was completed with genuine stakeholder engagement
- Stakeholders represent all required groups (district/school leaders, staff, parents/guardians, community members, and students where appropriate)

Notes:

4. Significant Strengths, Growth Areas, and Resource Inequities

Score: ___ /4

- Significant strengths and growth areas highlighted by the Needs Assessment are clearly identified
- A root cause analysis is completed for each growth area, focusing on causes within the school/district's control
- Resource inequities are identified, addressing unequal distribution across relevant areas (staffing, technology, interventions, curriculum, transportation, programming, etc.)
- Growth areas are designated as the school's Priorities for the upcoming section

Notes:

5. Overarching School Improvement Goals

Score: ___ /4

- All goals are S.M.A.R.T. (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound)
- Goals are aligned to both ESSA targets and local progress monitoring assessments
- Goals are aligned to needs and reason for designation
- Goals are based on measurable student outcomes

Notes:

6. Specific Evidence-Based Interventions to Address School Reform Priorities

Score: ___ /4

- Interventions are aligned to identified growth areas and overarching school improvement goals
- One National/State and one Internal Benchmark S.M.A.R.T. goals are identified for each selected intervention
- The level of evidence-based intervention is identified for each priority (strong, moderate, or promising)
- The source of the evidence-based intervention and justification for the selected evidence level are provided

Notes:

7. School Budget Proposal

Score: ___ /4

- The state's Uniform Chart of Accounts is followed throughout
- Clear rationale provided to justify Title I allowable funds (reasonable, necessary, and directly related to improving student achievement)
- Sufficient budget details provided
 - For hourly staffing, include number of hours/day, number of days/week, number of weeks/year, hourly rate
 - For contracts, include number of visits/sessions, target population, daily rate
 - For supplies, include specific information about the number and price per item
- Budget expenditures are aligned to the identified interventions and school reform priorities

Notes:

8. Coherence Across the Application

Score: ___ /3

- Show clear alignment across needs, goals, strategies, and budget (i.e. does the Needs Assessment inform the strengths and growths, do the growths inform the school's Priorities, do the Priorities inform the budget, etc.)