

**WORK FIRST BLOCK GRANT ELECTING COUNTY PLAN
SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS
FEDERAL FISCAL YEARS 2016-2019**

I. Format Requirements

The county plan must be formatted according to the following guidelines:

- 12 point Arial font.
- All white paper.
- All pages one-sided.
- Single spacing for sections containing narrative or bulleted text.
- One inch margins on all sides.
- Submit 1 hard copy.
- Submit 1 electronic copy of the complete plan. The electronic version must be one complete document. Do not separate the title page, the table of contents, etc from the plan and do not submit these documents separately. Create one county plan document for electronic submission. Attachments can be submitted with the hard copy.
- The naming conventions of the electronic version should be county name 2016-2019 plan (ex. Alamance County 2016-2019 plan).
- No binders or document covers (for hard copy).
- Staple or clip documents once, in the upper left corner (for hard copy).
- Page numbers on every page, at the top, including figures, attachments, etc.
- Include a cover sheet that has the county's name, contact person's name, mailing address, telephone number, fax number and email address.
- Table of contents with page numbers.

II. Plan Submission

Submit one copy in electronic form as a Microsoft Word document by email to work.first@dhhs.nc.gov.

Submit one hard copy no **later than close of business on September 30, 2014** of the complete county plan to:

Johnice Tabron
Work First Program Supervisor
Economic and Family Services
NC Division of Social Services
820 South Boylan Ave
2420 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-2420

III. Web sites with information to assist with the county planning process

http://www.ncesc.com	N. C. Division of Employment Security
http://sdc.state.nc.us/	State Data Center
http://ssw.unc.edu/workfirst/	County data for Work First
http://www.ncleg.net/Statutes/Statutes.html	N.C. General Statutes
http://ncdhhs.gov/dss/	State TANF Plan
http://www.census.gov/	U.S. Census Bureau – homepage
http://www.census.gov/main/www/stat_fed.html	U.S. Census Bureau – statistics
http://www.census.gov/cgi-bin/gazetteer	U.S. Census Bureau – U.S. Gazetteer

WORK FIRST BLOCK GRANT ELECTING COUNTY PLAN OUTLINE FOR FEDERAL FISCAL YEARS 2016 - 2019

Work First plans must include in its plan policies and practices on compliance with American with Disabilities Act (ADA), as well as the provision of interpreter services for its citizens that require such accommodations. Provide a detailed discussion on how the county complies with ADA the request for interpreter services. Further, the county plans should include the following:

I. Conditions within the County

Briefly describe the current realities for low-income families in the county and key issues addressed by the plan. What are the most pressing problems? In addition to the narrative, provide relevant supporting documentation. Include current and projected economic trends such as new businesses, plant closings, and job availability. In this section, **do not** include raw data, instead, include analysis and cite the sources. **(2 page maximum)**

II. Planning Process

A. Planning Committee

List the members of the local planning committee. Include names and affiliations. Membership of the committee must include, but is not limited to, representatives of:

1. the county board of social services
2. the Local Management Entity (LME)
3. the local public health department
4. the local school system(s)
5. the business community
6. the Division of Workforce Solutions (NCWorks Career Centers)
7. the board of county commissioners
8. the community-based organizations that are representative of the population to be served
9. the childcare service providers
10. the local Department of Social Services staff to include but not limited to Child Support, Children Services, Food and Nutrition Services, Medicaid, etc.
11. the transportation service providers

In addition, it is highly recommended that you include representatives of:

12. the faith based organizations
13. recipients of Work First and other types of assistance and services
14. the local Division of Vocational Rehabilitation representative
15. the Head Start agency
16. the local Work Force Development agency
17. other community advocacy agencies

B. Public Comment

Each county plan must include documentation of the public comment process. Describe when and how public comments were received, the length of the comment period, and how the public was notified of the opportunity to comment.

C. Planning Development

Describe the collaboration that led to the plan's development. Also include the proposed process for continued collaboration and coordination to carry out the plan. Include a discussion of the committee appointed by the county board of commissioners to identify the needs of the population to be served. How did this committee contribute to the review and development of the county block grant plan to respond to the identified needs? How was other public comment obtained and processed?

III. Goals and Performance Measures

A. Statewide Work First Goals

There are two goals for North Carolina's Work First Program.

1. Meeting Federal Work Participation Rates for All Families. Active participation in employment services and activities will lead to full time employment. Counties must ensure that at least 50% of all Work Eligible Individuals, as defined by Federal Rule, complete the required number of hours of federally countable work activities.
2. Meeting Federal Work Participation Rates for Two-Parent Families. Active participation in employment services and activities will lead to full time employment. Counties must ensure that at least 90% of all two-parent families with Work Eligible Individuals, as defined by Federal Rule, complete the required number of hours of federally countable work activities.

B. County Performance Measures

Electing Counties: County boards of commissioners are responsible for establishing county outcomes for performance measures **(N.C.G.S. §108A.27.3)**. For Electing Counties, describe how the county will document the progress toward these measures listed below:

1. Employment. Self-sufficiency will be realized primarily through the employment of Work First participants.
2. Meeting Federal Participation Rates. Active participation in federal countable work activities will lead to full time employment. **All counties will need to provide their work participation rates for the 12 calendar months prior to the month of submission of the new county plan.**
3. Providing Employment Services. Active participation in intensive employment services for all families is necessary in order to meet the participation rate and to ensure families are served adequately before the end of five years. One measure of success in Work First is the percentage of families who are subject to the work requirement that counties are assisting with job preparation and job placement.
4. Staying Off Welfare. Efforts to reduce welfare rolls, help adults find jobs, and increase self-sufficiency are undermined when families return to welfare. Families leaving Work First because of a job are tracked to determine if they return to cash assistance.
5. Job Retention. Families who leave Work First for employment and continue to be employed 6 to 12 months after leaving the program show evidence of keeping their income and increased job stability, which impacts a family's well being. This measure will be based on the number of responsible adults that leave Work First Family Assistance for employment who are still employed at 6 and 12 month intervals following termination.
6. Benefit Diversion. This is now an optional service for counties and is identified as being a successful outcome for an applicant for public assistance by avoiding becoming a monthly recipient. This is also recognized in the federal law, which specifies diversion from public assistance as a desired outcome. Use of Work First Diversion Assistance for a specified percentage or number of Work First applications is a performance measure for each county.

IV. Plans to Achieve the Outcomes and Goals

A. Activities

Describe the activities that will be available to participants to enable the program to meet the goals listed above. What agencies or organizations in the community will provide these activities, and where will they take place? Include both public and private resources. How will these activities contribute to meeting the goals? If the county will operate a work supplementation program, describe the program. **All counties will need to provide discussion of their strategies for increasing their work participation rate while ensuring that family centered services are provided to Work First applicants and recipients.**

B. Supportive Services

Describe the supportive services that will enable individuals to participate in the activities described above. What services will be provided? Who will carry them out? Where will they take place?

V. Administration

A. Authority

Will authority for administration of the Work First Program be delegated to an entity or agency other than the board of county commissioners for Electing Counties. If so, name and describe that entity or agency. (Notwithstanding any delegation of duty, the county board of commissioners shall remain accountable for its duties under the Work First Program.)

B. Organization

Describe the agency's organization for the functions listed below. Describe any collaborative arrangements (such as co-location of staff) counties have with other agencies, such as DES, Workforce Investment Act (WIA), Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), Job Link Centers, etc. to include the below:

1. Intake
2. Emergency assistance
3. Formal Assessments (employment and functional)
4. Employment services
5. Other supportive services
6. Eligibility determination

Are counties consolidating program functions such as employment services and eligibility caseworkers and or integrating programs such as Food and Nutrition Services, Medicaid and Work First?

D. Child Care

Describe how the county will prioritize its subsidized child care services.

E. Transportation

Describe in detail how the transportation needs of Work First participants will be met through local coordination and collaboration. What arrangements does the county have with the local public and private transportation system? What private transportation resources have the county developed? Will the agency continue to support the transportation retention services? Give an estimate of the amount of funds from the Work First Block Grant that will be allocated for transportation services and any other funds received.

F. Substance Abuse and other Services

Describe in detail the collaboration with the LME, developmental disabilities, and substance abuse services to provide assessments and treatment.

Include a copy of the local Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the LME.

Include a copy of the local MOA with VR or other Qualified Professional Agency.

G. Family Violence Option

Describe the arrangements for providing Family Violence Option waivers (See Work First Manual Section 104D) and the plans for coordinating with domestic violence service agencies in the area to provide services to victims of domestic violence.

H. Maintenance of Effort (MOE)

List the activities, staff, and services that will be funded using (MOE) funds. **Each county will spend MOE timely throughout the year to avoid last minute MOE expenditures. Counties that fail to meet its MOE may be subject to a program improvement plan (N.C.G.S. § 108A-27.9). Further, the Department may use the county's block grant to secure needed services for families in that county or reduce block grant allocations to counties that fail to meet MOE requirements.**

I. Child Welfare Services

Give an estimate of how much of the Work First Block Grant the county will devote to Child Welfare Services.

VI. Emergency Assistance

Describe the Emergency Assistance policies and procedures. For requirements, see Work First Manual Section 003. **Each county must list the amount of the Work First Block declared for Emergency Assistance.**

VII. Services to Low Income Families (under 200% of the federal poverty level)

As a reminder, providing 200% services is not optional. Describe the policies and procedures for these services, as discussed in Work First Manual Section 003. **Counties must list the amount of the Work First Block declared for low income families under 200% of the poverty level threshold.**

VIII. Services to Non-Custodial Parents (optional)

Describe the policies and procedures for these services, as discussed in Work First Manual Section 003. If the county chooses not to provide these **optional services**, include a statement to that effect.

IX. Exemption from the Work Requirement

Describe the county policy regarding exempting single custodial parents of children under age one from the work requirement. See Work First Manual Section 003. **If the county does not specify a policy in the county's plan, the county will follow Standard County policy.**

X. Innovative County Strategies

Describe activities or initiatives in the county that are innovative in meeting the goals of the Work First Program. These activities or initiatives may have already been described elsewhere in the plan; however, this is a place to showcase the innovations.

For example: Does the county have an innovative way to address domestic violence or literacy issues? What approach does the county find successful in working with long-term recipient families? What is the strategy for serving adults with disabilities? **(1 page maximum)**

XI. Special Issues

Describe any special issues or conditions in the county that could affect operation of the Work First Program.

XII. Eligibility Criteria

See Work First Manual Section 003. for the limitations that federal and state law place on eligibility criteria.

Describe in detail the eligibility criteria that will be used in the county. Include all terms and conditions for receiving Work First Program assistance and services, including, at a minimum:

- definition of relationships;
- who can apply/be included in the payment;
- payment levels (EA, 200% services, child welfare);
- countable income;
- sanctions;
- resource requirements (limit and countable items);
- time limits and extensions;
- exemptions, and exceptions to requirements;
- Benefit Diversion requirements;
- Reward incentives

If counties plan to follow the state's standard policy for any of these items, include a statement to that effect.

If there is any change to eligibility that would exclude individuals currently eligible, please explain.

If counties propose to change eligibility requirements or benefit levels, describe the reasons for these changes.

Attach a copy of a sample MRA to be used in the county.

XIII. Appeals Process

The Board of County Commissioners is ultimately responsible for this process but may delegate it to another entity as provided for in this section of the plan. Describe the counties' appeals process. The appeal process must substantially comply with **N.C.G.S. §108A-79**. Second level appeal hearings must be held in the county rather than by the Department of Health and Human Services.

XIV. Review Prior To Expiration of Time Limits

State Law [N.C.G.S. §108A-27.4(e)(7)] requires Electing county plans to include the process by which the county will review all Work First caseloads no later than three months prior to expiration of time limitations for receiving cash assistance. See Work First Policy Section 105.

XV. Funding Requirements

Estimate the amount of the county block grant that the county will spend for Benefit Diversion, Work First Family Assistance, Work First Services, and the Maintenance of Effort contribution.

Will the county reduce its maintenance of effort to below 100% of 1996-97 budgeted amounts? If so, what is the maintenance of effort (cannot be lower than 90%), and how does the county intend to use the savings from the maintenance of effort reduction?

XVI. Certification

The County Block Grant Plan must include certification, signed by the Chairman, that it was approved by the County Board of Commissioners.