



NC DEPARTMENT OF  
**HEALTH AND  
HUMAN SERVICES**

JOSH STEIN • Governor  
DEVDUTTA SANGVAI • Secretary  
CARLA WEST • Division Director, Human Services

February 4, 2025

Dear County Directors of Social Services

**Attention:** Work First Program Administrators, Managers and Supervisors

**Subject:** Work First Program Electing County Block Grant Planning Cycle for 2026 – 2028

**Priority:** **REVISION OF FISCAL YEAR:** Action Required for Electing Counties

The Division of Social Services is beginning the Work First Program Electing County planning cycle for Federal Fiscal Years (FFYs) 2026 - 2028. This letter provides guidance and deadlines for the Work First Program Electing County planning cycle.

**Electing County Status**

Electing Counties are required to submit an Electing County Status Form to the Division of Social Services to continue or discontinue their Electing County status each Work First planning cycle. The following counties are presently in Electing County status: Beaufort, Caldwell, Catawba, Lenoir, Lincoln, Macon, and Wilson. All Electing Counties Work First Block Grants are subject to the General Assembly appropriation provisions. Please complete the Electing County Designation Survey Attachment.

The revised deadline to return the survey for the Electing County Status for FFYs 2026 – 2028 is **February 10, 2025**. The decision must have the support of three-fifths of the Electing County's Board of Commissioners. Electing County Status surveys must be submitted via email to [Work.First.Policy.Team@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:Work.First.Policy.Team@dhhs.nc.gov) no later than the established deadline. If the status form is provided after the deadline, the Electing County will be re-designated as a Standard County.

**Electing County Work First Block Grant Planning**

Preparations should begin now in the development of the Work First Block Grant plan for FFYs 2026 - 2028 for Electing Counties. Electing Counties must involve multiple community partners in the planning process for the Work First Block Grant. This is an opportunity for Electing Counties to take advantage of the localized flexibility provided in the Work First program. Current and/or former Work First recipients, employers, childcare providers, child welfare staff, community advocacy agencies, and others may prove to be valuable resources in this planning process.

The Electing County Work First Block Grant plans are due to the Division of Social Services no later than close of business on **February 10, 2025**.

**NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES • DIVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

LOCATION: 820 S. Boylan Avenue, McBryde Building, Raleigh, NC 27603  
MAILING ADDRESS: 2401 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-2401  
www.ncdhhs.gov • TEL: 919-855-6335 • FAX: 919-334-1018

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY / AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER

**Standard County Work First Block Grant Planning**

All Standard Counties will remain in Standard County status for this planning cycle. Standard Counties do not have to return a plan or survey to the Division. Community meetings are not required, but strongly encouraged because they can assist and provide opportunities to promote a mutual understanding of the agencies and/or programs, long-term collaboration, employment, and family centered services for families in North Carolina.

Standard Work First counties must have the current information and/or detailed policy criteria on the below items placed on file at the county department/agency of Social Services by the beginning of each State Fiscal Year (SFY) for Work First program compliance. These documents should be reviewed annually and document an updated revision date. This will ensure fair and equitable services to all North Carolina citizens and compliance with federal and state regulations. Counties are subject to monitoring findings without current SFY information on file.

A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), contract, or protocol for collaboration, etc. with the below agencies:

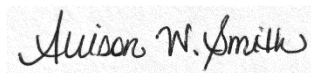
- Division of Workforce Solutions – NC Works Career Centers
- Domestic Violence Agency
- Division of Employment and Independence for People with Disabilities (formerly Vocational Rehabilitation)
- Local Management Entity – Manage Care Organization

Local policies for the following services (guidelines specified, payment limits, etc.)

- Benefit Diversion Survey for current SFY
- Emergency Assistance
- Exemption from the work requirement for single parents of children under age one
- Services for low-income families at or below 200% or 150% of the Federal Poverty Level
- Services for non-custodial parents (service optional)
- Transportation

Please see the attached Electing County Work First Planning Submission Instructions Outline and the Electing County Designation Survey for your reference. If you have questions regarding this information, contact [DSS.Policy.Questions@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:DSS.Policy.Questions@dhhs.nc.gov) .

Sincerely,



Allison W. Smith, Deputy Director  
Division of Social Services, Economic and Family Services  
NC Department of Health and Human Services

AS/rjs

Attachment (2)  
Submission Instructions Outline  
Electing County Status Designation Survey FFYs 2026 - 2028

**EFS-WF-06-2024**