

Elevate Application Information 2026

Contact Information

Dr. Gregory Firn

School Improvement Specialist

Phone: (801) 538-7846 | E-mail: gregory.firn@schools.utah.gov

What You Need to Know Before Applying

Thank you for your interest in the Utah State Board of Education's (USBE) Elevate School Program. Elevate is a voluntary, state-supported school improvement program designed to help eligible schools strengthen systems of teaching and learning, improve outcomes for identified student groups, and build sustainable capacity for continuous improvement.

Participation in Elevate is more than an opportunity to receive additional support—it is a commitment to a comprehensive, 4-year improvement process grounded in collaboration, data-informed decision-making, and evidence-based practices. Selected schools will work closely with their local education agency (LEA), a USBE-approved Continuous Improvement Expert (CIE), and the USBE to identify the root causes of student performance challenges, develop and implement a School Improvement Plan (SIP), and monitor progress toward measurable outcomes.

Before applying, school and LEA leaders should carefully review the information in this guide to determine whether Elevate is the right opportunity for their school. The following sections provide an overview of the program, including:

- **Purpose and Program Goals** – Understand the vision, objectives, and intended outcomes of the Elevate Program.
- **School Eligibility** – Determine whether your school meets the eligibility requirements for participation.
- **Benefits of Participation** – Learn about the coaching, technical assistance, professional learning, and funding available to participating schools.
- **School and LEA Commitments and Responsibilities** – Review the expectations and shared responsibilities required for successful implementation.
- **Continuous Improvement Process** – Become familiar with the structured process schools follow to assess needs, set priorities, develop a School Improvement Plan, and implement sustainable improvement strategies.
- **Program Timeline** – Review the annual application, onboarding, planning, and implementation milestones.

Elevate Program Overview

Purpose

The Elevate program is designed to help schools improve outcomes for identified student groups by implementing evidence-based continuous improvement practices. The Elevate program is established in [Utah Code 53E-5-301 through 53E-5-311](#) and administered in accordance with [USBE Administrative Rule R277-920](#).

Eligibility

Schools may apply to participate if they:

- Are identified as a Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) or Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI) school under Utah's accountability system.
- Are not receiving Title I School Improvement funds.

Benefits of Participation

Schools selected for Elevate receive comprehensive support that include:

- A comprehensive needs assessment and root cause analysis.
- A Continuous Improvement Expert (CIE) approved by USBE.
- Assistance developing and implementing a School Improvement Plan.
- Technical assistance throughout implementation.
- Professional learning focused on continuous improvement.
- Ongoing coaching, progress monitoring, and implementation support.
- Funding, subject to legislative appropriation and applicable program requirements, to support approved school improvement activities.

School Commitment

Participation in Elevate represents a multi-year commitment to comprehensive school improvement. Participating schools are expected to:

- Establish and maintain a School Improvement Committee.
- Engage school leaders, educators, families, and other stakeholders throughout the improvement process.
- Complete a comprehensive needs assessment and identify root causes of performance gaps.
- Collaborate with a Continuous Improvement Expert.
- Develop, implement, monitor, and annually refine a School Improvement Plan.
- Participate in required coaching, professional learning, progress monitoring, and reporting activities.
- Use program resources to implement evidence-based improvement strategies that address identified needs.

LEA Responsibilities

The local education agency plays an essential role in supporting successful implementation. LEAs are expected to:

- Demonstrate commitment to the school's improvement efforts.
- Support implementation of the School Improvement Plan.
- Prioritize resources and remove barriers that may impede implementation.
- Review and approve the School Improvement Plan through the governing board.
- Partner with USBE and the Continuous Improvement Expert throughout the improvement process.

Continuous Improvement Process

Elevate schools engage in a structured continuous improvement cycle that includes:

1. **Set Direction** – Establish a shared vision, define desired outcomes, and organize the improvement process.
2. **Needs Assessment** – Analyze multiple sources of data to identify performance gaps and determine root causes.
3. **Setting Priorities** – Prioritize the most significant needs and identify evidence-based improvement strategies.
4. **School Improvement Planning** – Develop a comprehensive School Improvement Plan with measurable goals, implementation actions, and monitoring measures.
5. **Implementation and Monitoring** – Implement improvement strategies, monitor progress, and make data-informed adjustments throughout the year.
6. **Continuous Review and Improvement** – Evaluate outcomes, refine strategies, and sustain improvements over time.

Timeline

The Elevate Program follows an annual cycle¹ that includes:

- **Summer-Fall:** Application and selection process.
- **October - November:** Schools identified for participation.
- **December-January:** Program onboarding and orientation.
- **Winter-Spring:** Needs assessment, priority setting, and School Improvement Plan development.

¹ Subject to Change based on the release of the State Report Card

- **On or Before June 1:** School Improvement Plan submitted to the LEA governing board.
- **On or Before July 1:** School Improvement Plan submitted to the USBE.
- **July:** School Improvement Plan approved and implementation begins for the upcoming school year.

Commitment to Continuous Improvement

The Elevate program is more than a funding opportunity—it is a collaborative partnership focused on improving outcomes for students. Success depends on strong leadership, meaningful stakeholder engagement, thoughtful use of data, and a sustained commitment to continuous improvement. Schools that participate in Elevate commit to building systems and practices that improve teaching, learning, and student success for years to come.

Elevate Application Process

Interested schools that meet the eligibility requirements (non-Title-I school identified as TSI or ATSI) complete the Elevate Program Application.

Elevate Application Readiness Self-Assessment ([Link](#))

The Elevate Application Readiness Self-Assessment is designed to help school and LEA leaders reflect on whether their school is prepared to engage in the comprehensive, multi-year continuous improvement process required by the Elevate Program.

The self-assessment is intended to foster meaningful discussion among school and LEA leadership and is not a scored component of the application. Instead, it serves as a reflective and contextual tool that complements the application narrative and supporting evidence.

USBE reviews the self-assessment, application responses, and required documentation to better understand the school's:

- Improvement needs;
- Leadership commitment to systemic change;

- Organizational capacity for continuous improvement; and
- Readiness to participate successfully in the Elevate Program.

Elevate Application Questions

The Elevate application requires interested schools to complete four questions that are evaluated using the published Elevate Application Question Rubric. The questions are:

1. Why is now the right time for the school to participate in Elevate?
2. What will success look like four years from now?
3. Is the school prepared to make meaningful changes based on evidence?
4. How does your school envision using Elevate funding², in combination with existing school and LEA resources, to improve outcomes for the identified TSI/ATSI student group(s)? Describe how these resources may support the implementation of your school improvement priorities and contribute to sustainable improvements in student achievement.

Elevate Application Question Rubric

The Elevate Application Question Rubric uses a four-point rating scale to evaluate each application question independently. Reviewers assign a score of 1, 2, 3, or 4 based on the quality of the response and the degree to which it demonstrates the school's readiness, commitment, and capacity to successfully participate in the Elevate School Program. Each score reflects the extent to which the applicant provides clear, specific, and evidence-based information aligned with the expectations of the program.

² A portion of the funds shall be used to contract with a USBE-approved Continuous Improvement Expert (CIE), including reasonable travel costs. The remaining funds shall be used only to implement the interventions identified in the approved School Improvement Plan (SIP) based on the findings from the needs assessment.