

Elevate Program

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Contact Information

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Introduction

Elevate Program Overview

The Elevate Program is a voluntary Utah state initiative for eligible non–Title I public and charter schools identified for Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) or Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI).

Participating schools commit to:

- Establishing a School Improvement Committee (SIC)
- Partnering with a USBE–approved Continuous Improvement Expert (CIE)
- Conducting a needs assessment and developing a School Improvement Plan (SIP)
- Submitting required plans and meeting established state deadlines
- Participating in a four–year continuous improvement cycle
- Meeting state–defined exit criteria outlined in Utah's ESSA Plan

Program benefits include:

- One–time state funding to implement the approved SIP
- Operational flexibility as authorized by statute
- Access to school leadership development opportunities

This Elevate FAQ document addresses frequently asked questions about the statutory requirements, governance roles, operational processes, and administrative rules for the Elevate Program.

Program Overview

What is an "Elevate school"?

According to [UCA 53E–5–301](#), an Elevate school is a district or charter school that meets the following criteria:

- It is not a Title I school.
- It is currently implementing targeted support and improvement (TSI) or additional targeted support and improvement (ATSI) activities under federal law.

- Has applied for and been formally designated as an Elevate school by the Utah State Board of Education (USBE).

Is participation in the Elevate Program mandatory?

No. The Elevate Program is entirely voluntary. Eligible schools must actively choose to apply for the designation to receive the state's structured turnaround supports and funding.

How many schools are designated, and how often?

The USBE accepts applications and identifies at least six schools as Elevate schools annually ([UCA 53E-5-302.1](#)). However, under USBE Administrative [Rule R277-920](#), this designation process occurs *only* in years when the state board does not designate a new cohort of Springboard schools (which happens on a four-year cycle).

Is there financial assistance provided to Elevate schools?

Yes. Subject to legislative appropriations, the USBE distributes a minimum of a \$375,000 one-time allocation to the local education board through the Utah Grants system for each Elevate school (USBE Administrative [Rule R277-920](#)).

Are there any restrictions on how the monies are used?

Yes. 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. The USBE may review the use of program funds and CIE contracts to ensure compliance with Utah Code and USBE Administrative [Rule R277-920](#).

What commitment does the Elevate Program require?

Designation as an Elevate school represents a commitment by the school and its local governing board to actively engage in a multi-year, evidence-based continuous improvement process. Participating schools agree to collaborate with the USBE and a USBE-approved CIE to identify and address the root causes of low performance, implement an approved SIP with fidelity, monitor progress using evidence, build sustainable capacity, and remain accountable for improving outcomes for identified student groups.

What are the exit criteria for an Elevate school?

Beginning with the 2026–2027 Elevate cohort, USBE Administrative [Rule R277–920](#) dictates that schools must successfully meet the exit criteria in place for their targeted support and improvement (TSI) or additional targeted support and improvement (ATSI) student groups, as explicitly outlined in the state's ESSA plan.

Beginning the Improvement Process

What happens immediately after a school receives an Elevate designation?

Two immediate actions take place:

- Needs Assessment: The USBE schedules and conducts a needs assessment analyzing the root causes of the school's low performance among its targeted student groups.
- Committee Establishment: The school must establish a School Improvement Committee (SIC) to steer the program locally.

What is the School Improvement Committee (SIC) and is this required?

Yes. The SIC is required. The SIC is the governing improvement team for an Elevate School. The SIC is responsible for representing key stakeholder groups, partnering with the CIE, creating, and monitoring the School Improvement Plan (SIP), and ensuring the school's improvement work remains focused on identified root causes and measurable outcomes.

Who serves on the SIC for District schools?

Per [UCA 53E-5-303](#) the committee consists of:

- The local school board member representing the school's voting district.
- The school principal.
- Three parents of students enrolled at the school (appointed by the school community council chair).
- One teacher at the school (appointed by the principal) and one teacher appointed by the school district superintendent.
- One school district administrator

Who serves on the SIC for Charter schools?

Per [UCA 53E-5-304](#) the committee consists of:

- A member of the charter school governing board (appointed by the chair of the charter school governing board).
- The school principal.
- Three parents of students enrolled at the school (appointed by chair of the charter school governing board).
- Two teachers at the school appointed by the school principal.

What is the Needs Assessment?

The Elevate needs assessment process focuses on the performance of identified TSI and/or ATSI student groups. As a result, it differs from traditional needs assessment processes by employing a problem-based approach. Rather than relying solely on quantitative data, the process integrates student achievement, attendance, behavior, and graduation data (if applicable) with qualitative evidence gathered through interviews, observations, focus groups, surveys, and stakeholder experiences. Combining these sources of evidence provides a more comprehensive understanding of the factors contributing to student outcomes and the context in which they occur.

Who conducts the needs assessment?

The USBE facilitates the needs assessment.

How much time does the needs assessment take to complete?

The Elevate needs assessment is conducted in four phases, each involving specific participants and time commitments. Phase 1 engages the school administrative team and LEA leadership and requires 90 to 120 minutes. Phase 2 is conducted with the School Improvement Committee (SIC) and typically takes three hours. Phase 3 reconvenes the school administrative team and LEA leadership for an additional 90 to 120 minutes. Phase 4 returns to the SIC and generally requires 90 to 120 minutes.

Continuous Improvement Expert (CIE)

What is a CIE?

A CIE is a USBE-approved individual or organization with a proven record of improving academic outcomes, coaching school leaders, and strengthening data-informed improvement systems. CIEs provide direct support based on the needs identified through the assessment process.

Is there a list of USBE Pre-Approved CIEs?

Yes. The USBE provides a list of pre-approved CIEs to Elevate schools.

Does an Elevate school have to work with a CIE?

Yes. Working with a CIE is a requirement per [UCA 53E-5-303](#) and [UCA 53E-5-304](#)

Does an Elevate school have to have a CIE during the entire Elevate designation?

Yes. (see USBE Administrative [Rule R277-920-13](#))

What are the required responsibilities of the CIE?

The CIE partners with the School Improvement Committee (SIC) to develop, implement, monitor, and evaluate the School Improvement Plan (SIP).

The CIE is responsible for:

- Providing ongoing implementation support and project management
- Delivering job-embedded professional learning for leaders and educators

- Strengthening leadership, instruction, and data-informed decision-making
- Monitoring implementation and evaluating SIP effectiveness using multiple sources of evidence (e.g., observations, site visits, surveys, interviews, and student achievement data)
- Coordinating with community partners to align supports that improve student outcomes

CIE contracts must include:

- Clearly defined performance expectations
- Measurable outcomes
- Consequences for failing to meet agreed-upon goals

How does an Elevate school select a CIE?

Selecting a CIE begins with developing a scope of work based on the findings of the needs assessment and root cause analysis. The school and LEA collaboratively develop and issue a request for proposals (RFP) for CIE services in accordance with the LEA's procurement policies and procedures.

Are there required elements to be included in the CIE proposal?

Yes. The CIE proposal shall describe how the CIE will address the root causes identified through the needs assessment and include a scope of work that outlines the services to be provided. At a minimum, the scope of work shall describe how the CIE will:

- Partner with the SIC to develop and implement the School Improvement Plan (SIP).
- Monitor implementation and evaluate the effectiveness of the SIP.
- Provide ongoing implementation support and project management.
- Deliver high-quality professional learning to build leadership, instructional, and data-use capacity; and
- Coordinate appropriate community and partner supports to improve student outcomes.

Is the USBE required to review and approve a CIE proposal?

Yes. Before a CIE may begin providing services, the USBE is required to review the proposal submitted under [UCA 53E-5-303](#) or [UCA 53E-5-304](#) and approve the proposal within 30 days of submission, as required by [UCA 53E-5-305\(3\)\(a\)\(i\)](#). Following USBE approval, the local governing board or charter governing board may execute the contract with the approved CIE in accordance with its applicable procurement and contracting policies.

School Improvement Plan**Are there required elements to be included in the SIP?**

Yes. The committee and the CIE collaboratively design a comprehensive plan that must include ([UCA 53E-5-303\(5\)](#)):

- Strategies to directly address the root causes identified in the USBE needs assessment.
- Specific recommendations regarding necessary changes to school personnel, culture, curriculum, assessments, instructional practices, governance, leadership, finances, or policies.
- Measurable student achievement goals, benchmarks, and a clear implementation timeline.
- A professional development plan focused on instructional practices.
- A detailed budget specifying exactly how resources will be allocated.
- Systems for monitoring progress and regularly communicating data to stakeholders.

Does the SIP require USBE review and approval?

Yes. As required by [UCA 53E-5-305\(3\)\(ii\)](#), the USBE shall review and approve the SIP.

What are the deadlines for SIP submission and approval?

- On or before June 1: The SIC must submit the finalized plan to the local school board or charter school governing board for approval ([UCA 53E-5-303\(7\)\(a\)](#) or [UCA 53E-5-304\(9\)\(a\)](#)).
- On or before July 1: Following local approval, the LEA governing board must submit the plan to the USBE ([UCA 53E-5-303\(7\)\(b\)](#) or [UCA 53E-5-304\(9\)\(b\)](#)).

Implementation and Supports

What kind of operational flexibility do Elevate schools have?

To ensure the SIP can be executed without bureaucratic delays, the local school board *must* grant the Elevate school "streamlined authority" (see [UCA 53E-5-303\(6\)\(b\)](#)) over:

- Staffing decisions and personnel
- School schedules and calendars
- Internal operational policies
- School-level budget allocations
- Academic programs

Are there additional professional development opportunities for Elevate school leaders?

Yes. [UCA 53E-5-309](#) and USBE Administrative [Rule R277-920](#) establishes the voluntary School Leadership Development Program, an in-depth, two-year professional learning cohort prioritizing research-based instructional practices and turnaround efforts. The state selects up to fifteen school leaders for this program, and school leaders assigned to an Elevate school are given high priority for selection. Participants who meet all program requirements are eligible to receive incentive pay at the conclusion of their cohort.