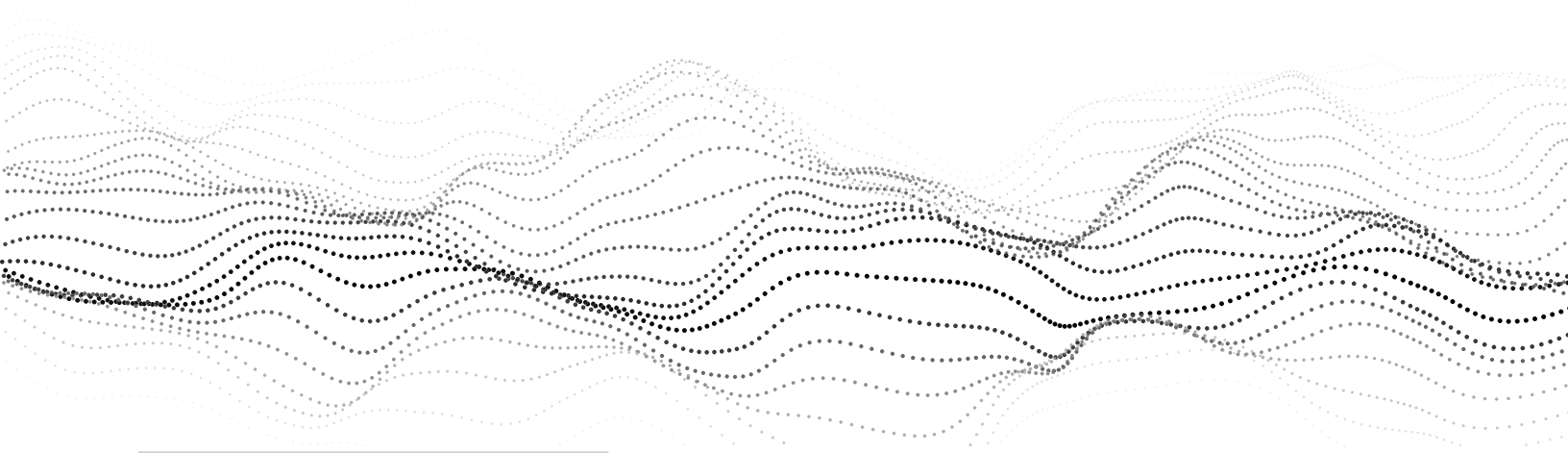
basis policy research

WORK GROUP CHARTER

Shared Commitments

NORTH CAROLINA WEIGHTED STUDENT FUNDING FORMULA STUDY



ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

This document describes how we intend to work together. It is a shared commitment among North Carolina Weighted Student Funding Formula Work Group (WSFF Work Group) members, not a legal contract. The Work Group adopts it by agreement at its first meeting and can revisit it at any time. Subject matter experts and alternates agree to these commitments too, through the acknowledgment at the end.

WHO WE ARE

Established under Section 8.22 of S.L. 2026-41, the WSFF Work Group is composed of the North Carolina Collaboratory (NC Collaboratory), BEST NC, and the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI). The NC Collaboratory awarded a research grant to Basis Policy Research (Basis) to serve as the Research Team and carry out the study. The Work Group will advise the Research Team throughout the project, with additional support from subject matter experts in education finance, North Carolina education practice and policy, and law.

WHAT WE ARE DOING

Per Section 8.22 of S.L. 2026-41, the Work Group will study and develop a strategy to transition North Carolina to a weighted student funding model for kindergarten through twelfth grade public education. The Work Group will report that strategy to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee by July 15, 2027. The final product will be a proposed three-year transition strategy from the current allotment-based funding model to a weighted student funding formula model, including

policy, funding, messaging, and technical assistance needed for leaders of local school administrative units and schools within those units should the state choose to pursue such a transition. At a minimum, the study will examine options to:

a. Consolidate nonteaching support funds into a flexible per-pupil allotment with significant flexibility;

b. Transition teacher pay from a position allotment to a dollar allotment based on average daily membership, maintaining student-based funding with greater average teacher pay transparency and flexibility;

c. Reassign all project- or resource-based funding into a set of designated line items;

d. Determine whether need-based funds can be consolidated and transitioned into a per pupil figure; and

e. Report on spending and provide any other needed accountability for the use of State funds.

The study will also examine whether to transfer responsibility for disbursing funds to local school administrative units from NCDPI to the State Education Assistance Authority (SEAA).

WHY THESE COMMITMENTS MATTER

Over the next ten months, members will see analysis long before it is final. Early numbers change as data are checked, assumptions are tested, and reviewers weigh in. A preliminary estimate of what a district would gain or lose that is repeated outside the room, for example, can harden into a fact that the final analysis no longer supports. And if any member is seen to have used early access to get ahead, the credibility of the whole study suffers. These commitments protect the research, the people who take part in it, and the trust among everyone involved in the work.

OUR COMMITMENTS

Let the evidence lead. We will weigh options on their merits, take seriously evidence that cuts against our preferred positions, and bring the interests of students and schools to the table. Different institutional perspectives make the work better. We would rather record an honest disagreement than reach a consensus that hides uncertainty or dissent.

Protect the independence of the research. The Research Team is responsible for research design, methods, analysis, interpretation, and the accurate reporting of findings. The Research Team does not administer State funds or represent any district, agency, or organization that would gain or lose under a particular formula, and the study's value to the General Assembly depends on findings that no member, including any member whose position they support, can be said to have shaped. Doing that well depends on hearing from everyone at the table. Every member is encouraged to question assumptions, point out limitations, and push hard on the work, as are the subject matter experts. The Research Team will respond to every concern raised, whether or not it changes the analysis, and any member who still disagrees can say so in the final report. What no member will do is try to direct, suppress, or selectively change findings to support a predetermined position.

Be open about our interests. Each member organization has a stake in this work. NCDPI's own role is part of the disbursement question. BEST NC has public positions on school funding. The NC Collaboratory reports to the General Assembly. Basis has a professional stake in the study's credibility, and its team brings prior published research and ongoing work on weighted funding in Tennessee and Washington State, two of the candidate comparison states. Having an interest does not disqualify anyone. We will name our interests at the start and again when they bear on a particular decision, and the Research Team will conduct all analyses independently of any member's institutional position. Subject matter experts and alternates disclose their interests on the acknowledgment and provide an outside check on the Research Team's own judgments.

Keep early work inside the project. Preliminary findings, modeling results, draft work products, meeting materials, and our nonpublic discussions stay within the project until they are released. We will not share, cite, or summarize them outside the project, or describe them as settled. The exception is a regular public update on the study, which every Work Group member will have the chance to help shape and review before it is released, and which will clearly state what is still preliminary. Within our own organizations, and with the subject matter experts who support the Work Group and Research Team, we will share them only with those who need them for this work and will ensure they understand these commitments.

Do not use early access for advantage. Access to nonpublic work is for this project only. We will not use it to gain a political, organizational, financial, or advocacy advantage. In practice, that means no:

- Briefing legislators, officials, districts, or partners on preliminary results ahead of release
- Op-eds, testimony, presentations, or social media posts that anticipate findings
- Fundraising, member, or donor communications that draw on nonpublic work
- Positioning our organizations or allies around results that are not yet public

These commitments do not limit our organizations' existing positions, our ordinary work using public information, or the general expertise we bring and develop along the way. Advocates will keep advocating, funders will keep sponsoring projects, practitioners will keep guiding the education system, and researchers will keep studying school finance and related topics. We simply will not do so with the project's nonpublic work or by implying a Work Group endorsement that has not been given.

Speak for ourselves, not for the Work Group. Only conclusions the Work Group has approved will be described as Work Group conclusions. Once findings are public, any member may discuss them, accurately and in context.

Report honestly. Study products will separate what the evidence shows from policy judgments and recommendations, and will be clear about assumptions, limitations, uncertainty, and tradeoffs. Credible findings will not be held back or softened because they are unwelcome to any member or to anyone else with a stake in the outcome.

HOW WE WILL WORK

Meetings and decisions. The Work Group will meet at six key milestones over the course of the study, with regular check-ins scheduled between. The Research Team will circulate materials at least 72 hours before each milestone meeting and will distribute a summary of decisions, open questions, and

assignments afterward. The Work Group will seek consensus wherever possible. Where consensus cannot be reached, final methodological and analytic judgments, findings, and recommendations rest with the Research Team. Work Group members advise the Research Team; their review does not include authority to revise or override findings.

Come prepared. Meeting time is for deliberation and decisions, not for presenting materials for the first time. The Research Team will keep pre-reads concise and will flag the decisions to be made and the questions that need members' judgment. In turn, members will read the materials before each meeting and, where possible, send questions in advance so the Research Team can come ready to answer them. A member who cannot attend or prepare may share views in writing beforehand. A Work Group member may also send an alternate who has read the materials. Each member will name one standing alternate at the start of the project: someone from the same organization who can speak for its perspective. Alternates sign the acknowledgment at the end of this document and take full part in discussion. To keep the work on schedule, decisions made at a meeting stand, and settled questions are reopened only when new evidence warrants it.

Recording disagreement. Any voting member may attach a short, written statement of up to two pages to the final report explaining where and why they disagree.

Who sees what. The Research Team keeps a list of everyone with access to nonpublic materials. All subject matter experts sign the attached acknowledgment before they receive any materials.

The work plan calls for sharing early work with certain groups as part of the study. This sharing does not require separate approval each time it occurs:

- Subject matter experts, who will review analytic plans, assumptions, and draft results as their roles require.
- Interview and focus group participants, who will react to draft concepts so the Research Team can test and refine them.

All other sharing of nonpublic materials follows the confidentiality commitments above.

Extra care with district-level results. Estimates for named districts and charter schools are the most sensitive thing this study produces. The Research Team will present them with the context needed to interpret them and will circulate files only when they are needed for review. All preliminary materials will carry a version date and the label *Preliminary Research: For Work Group Use Only. Do Not Cite or Distribute.*

Student and other non-publicly available data. Student-level records from NCDPI are governed by FERPA and the project's data-use agreement. Only the Research Team and school finance experts authorized under the data-use agreement will work with student-level and other non-publicly available data. Everyone else sees aggregate results, with small counts suppressed. Data will be returned or destroyed as the agreement requires.

Interviews and focus groups. The Research Team conducts all stakeholder interviews and focus groups. Other Work Group members join only when the Research Team decides their presence will not affect respondents' answers. The Research Team holds all notes and recordings. Summaries shared with the Work Group will not identify individuals without their permission, and no member will use the interviews to contact or follow up with participants for other purposes.

Review of drafts. The Research Team will share draft findings for technical review. Members will have up to 10 days to flag errors and raise concerns, and the Research Team will respond to each one. Final decisions about findings rest with the Research Team. No member can delay the final report beyond the statutory deadline.

Questions from legislators, the media, and others. We will refer requests about the study to the NC Collaboratory and the Research Team, who will let the rest of the Work Group know about them promptly. Anyone responding on the study's behalf can speak to its process, timeline, the questions it is examining, and anything already released, but not to preliminary results. Interim updates to the General Assembly will be prepared jointly by the NC Collaboratory and the Research Team. Every Work Group member will have the chance to contribute to and review them before they are delivered and, as appropriate, to join the briefings themselves. Because these briefings are often scheduled on short notice, we may not always be able to find a time that works for every member.

Public records and open meetings. Some members are public agencies subject to North Carolina's public records and open meetings laws, and nothing in these commitments asks anyone to set those laws aside. Because this is a research study, some of its materials may also have protections under those laws. State law exempts certain unpublished research data and records produced by or for state universities (G.S. 116-43.17), and student records are confidential under FERPA and state law. NC Collaboratory counsel will confirm how these protections apply to the Work Group's materials and meetings, including copies held by members outside the university system. Whatever the law allows, our commitments are about the choices we make ourselves. If a member receives a records request, they will let the NC Collaboratory and the Research Team know promptly, so that counsel can determine which protections apply and anything released can be accompanied by a note on its preliminary status.

If something slips. Anyone who learns that nonpublic material may have gotten out will tell the NC Collaboratory and the Research Team right away, help limit further spread, and talk it through with the group. A serious or repeated lapse may mean limiting that person's access to preliminary materials.

Future work. Members may identify further research that grows out of the study and pursue it together under a separate agreement.

HOW LONG THESE COMMITMENTS LAST

These commitments run through delivery of the final report on July 15, 2027, and any follow-up during legislative review and the revision process, but no later than December 31, 2027, unless the Work Group agrees otherwise. Our commitments about student data, interview participants, and any material that was never released continue after that.

ADOPTION

Adopted by agreement of the Work Group on October 30, 2026.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT FOR SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS & ALTERNATES

NORTH CAROLINA WEIGHTED STUDENT FUNDING FORMULA STUDY

Thank you for lending your expertise to this study. You will see work in progress: early analysis, draft findings, and options that are still being tested. That work will change before it is final, and its value depends on the research staying independent and on early results staying inside the project. In return for access, we ask that you commit to the following.

- **Keep it confidential.** I will not share, cite, or describe nonpublic project materials or discussions outside the project, and will share them only with people the Research Team has approved.
- **Use it only for this project.** I will not use what I see to gain an advantage for myself, my organization, or anyone else, whether in consulting, advocacy, grant-seeking, or other work.
- **Respect the Research Team's role.** I will give candid, independent advice. I understand that decisions about methods and findings rest with the Research Team.
- **Disclose interests.** I have listed below any current work for, or stake in, a North Carolina district, charter school, agency, or advocacy organization that bears on this study, and I will update the list if that changes.
- **Protect data.** I will follow any data-use restrictions that apply, will not try to identify individual students or interview participants, and will return or delete materials when asked or when the project ends. If I am authorized to work with student-level records, I will do so only as the data-usage agreement allows.
- **Refer questions.** I will refer media, legislative, and other outside questions about the study to the NC Collaboratory and the Research Team.
- **Speak up if something slips.** If I learn that nonpublic material may have gotten out, I will tell the NC Collaboratory and the Research Team right away.

Subject matter experts may continue their own scholarship. They will not draw on nonpublic project materials until the final report is public or December 31, 2027, whichever is later. After that, they will coordinate with the Research Team, and with NCDPI and any other data providers as their agreements require, on any work that uses project data.

This is a professional commitment, not a legal contract. It continues until the final report is public or December 31, 2027, whichever is later, and its commitments about data and unreleased materials continue after that.

I have read and agree to uphold these commitments and the Work Group's Shared Commitments.

Name: _____

Affiliation: _____

Role: ☐ Subject matter expert ☐ Alternate

Interests to disclose (or "none"): _____

_____

Signature: _____

Date: _____