



# GREATER TEXAS FOUNDATION

## Texas Competency-Based Education (CBE) Design Collaboratory Call for Institutional Applications

<b>Project Funder:</b>	Greater Texas Foundation
<b>Project Period:</b>	September 7, 2021 through May 31, 2022
<b>RFA Release Date:</b>	Tuesday, July 20, 2021
<b>Number of Awards:</b>	Up to ten (10) 4-year institutions
<b>Questions Deadline:</b>	Please direct questions about the Request for Applications to Monique Ward at <a href="mailto:monique@c-ben.org">monique@c-ben.org</a> . Submit all inquiries by 5:00 pm CDT on Tuesday, August 17, 2021 via email
<b>Information Sessions:</b> (Participation optional)	Wednesday, July 28, 2021 1:00 – 2:00 pm CDT Click <a href="#">here</a> to join Tuesday, August 3, 2021 12:00 – 1:00 pm CDT Click <a href="#">here</a> to join
<b>Application Deadline:</b>	Applications must be received by 11:59 pm CDT on Monday, August 23, 2021 via electronic form: <a href="https://cbexchange.wufoo.com/forms/qk6ps221wf9lnw">cbexchange.wufoo.com/forms/qk6ps221wf9lnw</a>
<b>Administered by:</b>	Competency-Based Education Network on behalf of Greater Texas Foundation

## COLLABORATORY OVERVIEW

Despite decades of research and investment in redesign, postsecondary education remains deeply inequitable with too few learners reaching credential attainment. Particularly with the economic transformation underway as a result of COVID, ad hoc solutions that tinker around the edges of postsecondary education are not enough to significantly move the needle on equitable outcomes in credential attainment. Now is the time for an alternative approach to higher education.

Quality competency-based education (CBE) programs, grounded in labor market value, can eliminate disparities in educational outcomes of students from historically underserved and underrepresented populations, easing transitions to work and to advanced studies, while significantly reducing stop-outs or delays along the way. In this project, Greater Texas Foundation will partner with the Competency-Based Education Network to equip a select group of institutions for CBE design using group-based and individualized technical assistance and supports. As a result of this project, institutions will be able to build, launch, and track learner outcomes from properly designed CBE programs and, in turn, prove the effectiveness of CBE models for providing affordable, clear, and efficient credential attainments pathways for students.

The **Texas CBE Design Collaboratory**, a structured community of practice, will help up to 10 four-year institutions more rapidly realize the potential of competency-based education by building institutional capacity to create new programs, removing barriers often present in the design and implementation phases, and growing demand for CBE learners with employer and industry partners. Institutional leaders will be supported by the nation's leading CBE experts, including those with SACSCOC accreditation experience, through group workshops and individualized coaching. By using this approach, institutions can learn together and from each other, while experiencing competency-based methods of learning. The group will meet regularly for learning and collaboration and will be asked to complete project-specific assignments between meetings. Meetings will be held both virtually and in-person.

Although each learning session will be tailored to the intended outcomes of a particular module, sessions will typically feature a large block of time for new learning, designed to equip participants with the competencies needed to achieve the next set of project milestones. Time will be given for reflecting on and discussing challenges from previous work cycles. Teams will have a safe space to surface challenges and share strategies for overcoming obstacles. Each team will work with CBE experts and their peer learning community with guided support to begin next steps in the work cycle and to inform localized implementation.

Institutional leaders will complete guided activities with assistance from a curriculum designer and will build out on paper a full CBE baccalaureate program. Additionally, an instructional designer will be provided to build out one competency in the institution's learning management system as an exemplar for future replication across the remaining program competencies by the institution.

Collaboratory participants will receive support to attend CBExchange 2021, the nation's premier CBE conference, held November 9-12 in Austin, Texas. During this conference, participants will learn from other leading thinkers in the CBE space and network with colleagues from around the world. A special fireside chat session will occur during the conference for Collaboratory participants to debrief their conference learnings in real time.

## CBE BACKGROUND

Competency-based education combines an intentional and transparent approach to curricular design with an academic model in which the time it takes to demonstrate competencies varies and the expectations about learning are held constant. Students acquire and demonstrate their knowledge and skills by engaging in learning exercises, activities and experiences that align with clearly defined programmatic outcomes. Students receive proactive guidance and support from faculty and staff. Learners earn credentials by demonstrating mastery through multiple forms of assessment, often at a personalized pace.

Competency-based education is rapidly changing, and new models are constantly emerging. In most competency-based programs, learning can occur in a wide variety of forms and settings, and students can receive regular support and encouragement along the way. Students are assessed using criterion-referenced, performance-based tools that reinforce the rigor of programs. Many of these programs are designed as flexible, affordable options for students who are not served well by existing postsecondary programs. Students receive more intensive guidance and support from faculty and mentors and also have the option of accelerating their studies to save additional time and money.

Throughout course and program design, a focus on rigor and quality is paramount. In recent years, experts in the field have come together through C-BEN to form a framework for quality to guide CBE design and implementation. According to C-BEN's Quality Framework for CBE Programs, there are eight elements of quality that should be present in every competency-based education program:

1. Demonstrated institutional commitment to and capacity for competency-based innovation.
2. Clear, measurable, meaningful, and integrated competencies.
3. Coherent program and curriculum design.
4. Credential-level assessment strategy with robust implementation.
5. Intentionally designed and engaged learner experience.
6. Collaborative engagement with external partners.
7. Transparency of student learning.
8. Evidence-driven continuous improvement.

Competency-based education ranges from forms that incorporate competencies into courses and remain term-based and grade-based to ones that completely dispense with discrete courses and set timelines, as in the case of direct assessment. And there are variations in between. The uniting force behind programs that claim to be competency-based is its commitment to and alignment with C-BEN's Quality Framework. The Collaboratory will be rooted in quality and the outcomes will be designed to help participating institutions to be in compliance with the quality assurance standards.

## BACKWARD DESIGN APPROACH

Consistent with the Quality Framework, the workshops will follow the three-step backward design model for curriculum development.

**Step one** starts with the “end in mind” and requires faculty subject matter experts (SMEs), in partnership with participating employer or industry partner(s), to identify the desired competency a learner should be able to demonstrate if earning a given credential. Because of the performance-based nature of CBE, this set of competencies would be described behaviorally using written descriptors. In **step two**, the measurability and method for assessing the competency set would be determined. In other words, how would someone know if a learner is competent? What is it this person would do or not do? In what context would the learner demonstrate this behavior? Once those questions are answered, an overarching, programmatic assessment strategy can be created featuring authentic, performance-based assessment methods. Finally, in **step three**, the learning journey is created to sequence and scaffold instruction, leading the learner to successful performance in each competency area, both respectively and holistically.

## COLLABORATORY OUTCOMES

At the conclusion of the Texas CBE Design Collaboratory, institutions will have completed guided activities to:

- Identify and behaviorally define the competencies needed for the selected pathway, known as the competency set.
- Establish performance-based levels of mastery for the competency set.
- Create an overarching assessment strategy for the competency set.
- Write the instructional materials for one competency in the set.
- Build the selected competency in the institution’s learning management system as an exemplar for future replication across the remaining competencies in the set.

## PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS

The Collaboratory is intended to serve as a structured community of practice. As such, selected colleges agree to:

- Establish a consistent CBE Implementation team, including at least one employer or industry partner. **Institutional teams should consist of:** (1) project champion, (2) academic leader in field of study (must be in a Provost, Dean, Department Chair or equivalent position, (3) student services leader, (4) instructional or curriculum designer, (5) faculty member in subject matter area, and (6) employer partner. At times, other institutional representatives such as the registrar, financial aid director, or career services director may be asked to attend Collaboratory meetings.
- Participate in all Collaboratory workshops, held both virtually and in-person, with fellow participating colleges and national experts. NOTE: Travel to and from meeting site at institution’s expense.
- Complete and submit assignments in between workshop sessions.
- Meet with designated coach for individualized feedback on assignments.
- Collaborate with external curriculum designer.
- Provide LMS access to instructional designer for course build-out.
- Complete evaluation and process documentation.
- Include implementation team members in all workshops, either virtually or in-person.

## BENEFITS FOR PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS

Institutions will benefit from numerous capacity-building supports, including:

- Instruction and guidance through a structured community of practice, led by the nation's leading experts.
- Networking with peers from other Texas institutions on a similar CBE journey.
- Access to individualized feedback and customized supports for each team assignment.
- Assistance from an experienced CBE curriculum designer who will help build and develop the first competency.
- Support from a seasoned instructional designer who will assist in building the first competency in the institution's learning management system.
- Registration, hotel, and travel allowance for up to three representatives to attend CBExchange 2021.

## ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Greater Texas Foundation and the Competency-Based Education Network are seeking up to 10 Texas-based institutions to participate in the Collaboratory. An institution must be in good standing with SACSCOC in order to apply. The selected institutions must meet the following eligibility criteria:

1. Be a four-year Texas-based institution seeking to enhance a specific college to work transition pathway.
2. Identify at least one employer to actively partner with on the selected college to work transition pathway.
3. Select an academic discipline/program for competency-based education that corresponds to a high-need industry and leads to upward economic mobility for credential holders/graduates.
4. Target returning adults, with particular interest in those not well-served by today's model of higher education or those individuals currently underserved at the given institution.

## APPLICATION PROCESS

Interested institutions will apply to participate through an application process established by Greater Texas Foundation and the Competency-Based Education Network. To access the application, [click here](#). To be considered, all applications must be submitted electronically and in its entirety. To see a pdf copy of the application, [click here](#). Institutions may submit more than one application, but we anticipate selecting no more than one application per institution.

## APPLICATION SCORING

Qualified applications will be reviewed against a pre-determined criteria and points will be allocated according to the following distribution:

Institutional Information (15%), Program Pathway/College-to-Work Transition (40%), Internal and External Stakeholder Engagement (30%), and Letters of Support (15%). The ten (10) institutions with the highest point total will be selected.

## CALENDAR OF KEY DATES

The Collaboratory will follow a pre-planned series of events, including carefully curated and designed workshops to provide participants with the information needed to successfully achieve the project's overarching goals.

July 28, 2021	Application Information Session (optional) Zoom Link: <a href="https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86245133074?pwd=QTJ0LzV3M0k2RjhQYkYkRk-FLU01WZz09">https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86245133074?pwd=QTJ0LzV3M0k2RjhQYkYkRk-FLU01WZz09</a>
August 3, 2021	Application Information Session (optional) Zoom Link: <a href="https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84159411186?pwd=Z1NpSTdSbjRoUFNNcF-NoOFllK3RMUT09">https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84159411186?pwd=Z1NpSTdSbjRoUFNNcF-NoOFllK3RMUT09</a>
August 17, 2021	Deadline to Submit Questions on Application Process
August 23, 2021	Deadline to Submit Application to Participate
September 2, 2021	Announcement of Selected Institution
September 21, 2021 (in-person)	Collaboratory Workshop #1 - <b>What is Competency-Based Education? How do you Ensure Quality in Competency-Based Design? Backward Design Step 1: Identify the Competencies</b>
October 19, 2021 (in-person)	Collaboratory Workshop #2 - <b>Backward Design Step 2: Determine Assessment Strategy</b>
November 9-12, 2021 (in-person)	CBExchange Conference, Omni Barton Creek Resort & Spa, Austin, Texas
November 30, 2021 (virtual)	Collaboratory Workshop #3 - <b>Backward Design Step 3: Craft the Learning Journey</b>
January 18, 2022 (virtual)	Collaboratory Workshop #4 - <b>Overcoming Barriers to CBE Implementation, including Accreditation</b>
February 22, 2022 (in-person)	Collaboratory Workshop #5 - <b>Supporting Learners in CBE Programs</b>
March 22, 2022 (virtual)	Collaboratory Workshop #6 - <b>Faculty &amp; Staff Roles and Responsibilities</b>
April 26, 2022 (virtual)	Collaboratory Workshop #7 - <b>Evidence-Informed Continuous Improvement Processes and Practices</b>
May 24, 2022 (in-person)	Collaboratory Workshop #8 - <b>Model Exchange &amp; Collaboratory Celebration</b>