



2025-2026 General Assembly

SENATE BILL 257: 2026 Appropriations Act, Sec. 8.9: Revise Powers and Duties of the North Carolina Collaboratory

Analysis of: S.L. 2026-41, Sec. 8.9

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Section 8.9 of S.L. 2026-41 (Senate Bill 257) makes the following modifications to the laws governing the North Carolina Collaboratory (Collaboratory):

- Requires the Collaboratory to support research and development programs, research administration capacity building, and intra- and inter-campus collaborations at institutions of higher education.
- Eliminates the requirement that the Collaboratory assist the Office of State Fire Marshal in the maintenance of the online reporting portal on the storage and deployment of Aqueous Film Forming Foams.
- Empowers the Collaboratory to teach and train staff and postdoctoral researchers, in addition to students and faculty, to engage in and administer neutral and unbiased research and advise on science policy through (i) informal workshops and similar events, and (ii) formal delivery of curriculum and other information.
- Prohibits the Collaboratory from using funds appropriated by the General Assembly and used by the Collaboratory for indirect overhead costs at any entity, including a constituent institution, that is partnering with and funded by the Collaboratory.
- Modifies the Collaboratory's existing exemption from State purchasing and contracting laws to clarify that the Collaboratory is exempt from certain State purchasing and contracting laws for projects addressing either of the following:
 - A perceived, potential, or real concern regarding public health, safety or welfare.
 - Time-sensitive opportunities that have the potential to benefit the State.
- Requires the Collaboratory to provide a justification in writing that cites the specific concern or opportunity that prompted the utilization of an exemption from State purchasing and contracting laws, post the written justification on its website for the duration of the project, and report the written justification to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Agriculture and Natural Economic Resources, the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services, the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, and the Fiscal Research Division within 30 days of posting the justification on its website.
- Requires units of State and local government to cooperate and assist the Collaboratory within 30 calendar days of the Collaboratory making a request.
- Prohibits the Collaboratory, or a research team at an institution of higher education funded by the Collaboratory, from publishing or releasing any information received from a unit of State or local government that is not a public record or that is otherwise confidential. The Collaboratory can release de-identified, aggregated information or data based on any information or data received

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from a unit of State and local government if the release contains no personally identifiable information.

- Authorizes the Collaboratory to negotiate and impose publication, data use, and data management terms and conditions for projects funded by the Collaboratory.
- Allows the Collaboratory to retain unexpended funds appropriated from any source of funds and used by the Collaboratory to carry out its powers and duties, to the extent permitted by federal law.
- Authorizes any entity to provide funds, including grant funds, directly to the Collaboratory if the funds are (i) a donation or (ii) for research projects to be conducted at one or more constituent institutions of The University of North Carolina in which the Collaboratory provides those funds to support the research project. If an entity provides funds as a grant to the Collaboratory, the Collaboratory can manage the grant and determine the terms and conditions of the grant and related subawards, including rates, if any, of indirect overhead related to those funds.
- Exempts records associated with a project or study of the Collaboratory from State public records requirements if the project or study is associated with any of the following:
 - Specific engineering, vulnerability, or detailed design information about proposed or existing critical infrastructure.
 - Vulnerability and risk assessments.
 - Information relating to construction, renovation, or repair of public buildings and facilities.
 - Confidential information under the State public records laws.
 - Personal identifying information.

Additionally, this section requires employees of the Collaboratory to maintain legislative confidentiality for documents or reports produced at the request of a legislator.

This section became effective July 7, 2026.