PLUS PROGRAM · ALIGNMENT GUIDE · DRUG-FREE COMMUNITIES

PLUS ALIGNMENT GUIDE

DRUG-FREE COMMUNITIES SUPPORT PROGRAM

SIDE-BY-SIDE LANGUAGE FOR GRANT WRITERS. ADAPT EVERY BRACKET TO YOUR SCHOOL.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The Drug-Free Communities (DFC) Support Program is a federal grant run by the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) in partnership with the CDC. It funds community coalitions that work to reduce youth substance use. The applicant is a coalition with members from twelve required community sectors. A school district takes part as the coalition's school sector partner, and a district can also serve as the coalition's fiscal agent. Coalition members must have worked together on youth substance use for at least six months before applying. Awards are up to $125,000 per year for five years, and the coalition must match the federal share with non-federal cash or in-kind resources. As of October 31, 2026, the FY 2026 NEW (Year 1) notice (CDC-RFA-CE-26-0061) is closed and FY 2026 awards were announced in September 2026. The FY 2027 NEW (Year 1) notice (CDC-RFA-CE-27-0058) is forecast on Grants.gov with an estimated posting date of January 26, 2027 and an estimated close date of March 31, 2027. Forecast dates change, so confirm them on Grants.gov. NEW notices are only for coalitions never funded before. A district joining a coalition that already holds a DFC award takes part through that coalition's continuation or its Year 6 competing continuation application.

This guide follows the DFC framework in the order a coalition plans with it: the two DFC goals, the twelve community sectors, the Strategic Prevention Framework, the seven strategies for community-level change, and the DFC core measures. Each table shows what DFC asks for, where PLUS fits, and sample language the coalition can adapt for its application and action plan. The sample language uses brackets for the details only your coalition and district can supply. Replace every bracket with your own data, schools and sector members, and rewrite the language in the coalition's voice.

> **Writer's note.** Use the rows that fit. The coalition writes the application, and PLUS appears only where the school and youth sectors do their work. A strong application shows PLUS carrying two or three strategies inside the schools and leaves community, enforcement and policy work to the sectors that own it.

THE TWO DFC GOALS

DFC ASKS FOR	WHERE PLUS FITS	SAMPLE LANGUAGE
Goal 1. Establish and strengthen collaboration among community stakeholders and organizations to address youth substance use	PLUS gives the school sector a monthly product to bring to the coalition table: the cycle report with Direction data and the Forum's top four critical issues. Information moves up from the PLUS class to the district office, and the school sector representative can carry it to the coalition.	*"The school sector representative will bring each month's PLUS cycle summary to the coalition meeting. Coalition decisions will return to [schools] through the district's PBIS and MTSS teams and the PLUS staff team."*
Goal 2. Reduce substance use among youth and, over time, among adults, by addressing risk factors and promoting protective factors	PLUS works on both sides. Youth development activities during the school day build connection and belonging. Direction and Forums measure risk factors such as vaping, exclusion and harassment every cycle.	*"At [schools], PLUS will build protective factors through monthly youth development activities and will measure risk factors such as [vaping on campus and feeling left out] every 30-day cycle."*

THE TWELVE COMMUNITY SECTORS

DFC requires a coalition member from each of twelve sectors: youth, parent, business, media, school, youth-serving organization, religious or fraternal organization, law enforcement, civic or volunteer groups, healthcare professional, a state, local or tribal governmental agency with expertise in substance use, and other organizations involved in reducing substance use. PLUS supports two of them.

DFC ASKS FOR	WHERE PLUS FITS	SAMPLE LANGUAGE
School sector. A representative of the school system with influence in school policies and procedures	Name a district administrator who oversees the PLUS sites and can carry decisions back to them. PLUS cycle reports already go to the district office.	*"[Title], [District], represents the school sector. [They oversee] the PLUS Program at [schools] and bring cycle data to the coalition each month."*
Youth sector. A youth member 18 years of age or younger who attends school	PLUS Team members work with real campus data every month and can share Forum findings at coalition meetings. The Advisor selects the PLUS Team to reflect the student body.	*"[Two] PLUS Team members, ages [16 and 17], represent the youth sector. They share Forum findings and Direction results with the coalition [each quarter]."*

DFC ASKS FOR	WHERE PLUS FITS	SAMPLE LANGUAGE
The other ten sectors	PLUS does not fill these sectors. PLUS family Forums and cycle data can support the parent, media and healthcare members in their own work.	*"The coalition's parent, media and healthcare members will use PLUS cycle data to shape [parent education and community messaging]."*

THE STRATEGIC PREVENTION FRAMEWORK

DFC coalitions plan with SAMHSA's Strategic Prevention Framework. Its five steps are assessment, capacity, planning, implementation and evaluation. PLUS runs a similar loop on each campus every 30 days, which lets school data feed the coalition's own planning.

DFC ASKS FOR	WHERE PLUS FITS	SAMPLE LANGUAGE
Assessment. Use local data to identify priorities and populations at higher risk	Direction surveys a new representative sample of less than 10 percent of each campus every cycle with the same questions. The Forum gathers qualitative data from 40 to 50 high school students or 25 to 30 middle school students.	*"Each month PLUS adds current school data to the coalition's assessment: Direction results on [vaping and substance use items] and the top four critical issues named by students in a Forum."*
Capacity. Engage partners across sectors and involve youth	The PLUS staff team (administrator, counselor or PBIS lead, Advisor) trains together. The PLUS Team gives the coalition an active youth group inside each school.	*"The district builds capacity by funding a PLUS class section and Advisor at [schools]. The PLUS staff team at each site attends the 2-Day PLUS Program Development Training."*
Planning. Identify risk and protective factors and select strategies	In the action planning step, students review both kinds of data and plan the activities the campus needs.	*"In each cycle the PLUS Team plans schoolwide activities that address the risk and protective factors in the coalition's action plan, such as [perception of peer disapproval]."*
Implementation. Carry out activities and adjust as conditions change	PLUS Teams carry out activities with the campus nine times a year and share the data with the school community.	*"PLUS Teams will run [two] schoolwide prevention campaigns each year built from cycle data, and will adjust the next cycle's plan based on the results."*
Evaluation. Measure progress and share results	Students measure again in the next cycle. The cycle report goes to the principal, counselors, PBIS and MTSS teams and the district office.	*"PLUS cycle reports will be shared with the coalition's data workgroup each month as local data alongside the DFC core measures."*

THE SEVEN STRATEGIES FOR COMMUNITY-LEVEL CHANGE

DFC asks coalitions to use strategies that reach the whole community. PLUS carries the first three inside schools and supports the fourth. The coalition carries the rest.

DFC ASKS FOR	WHERE PLUS FITS	SAMPLE LANGUAGE
1. Provide information about youth substance use	The PLUS Team shares each cycle's data with the campus through posters, announcements and family Forums. A Kern High School District PLUS Team ran a vaping poster campaign as a full cycle from survey to Forum to data to campaign.	*"The PLUS Team will share vaping and substance use data with students and families each cycle, using posters, announcements and [two] evening family Forums a year."*
2. Build skills so youth and adults build positive social skills and decision-making abilities	Forum participants practice sharing and listening in small groups and discuss what students can do about pressure and exclusion. PLUS Team members practice facilitation and planning.	*"Each month a new group of [40 to 50] students will take part in a Forum where they examine how students treat each other on campus and what students can do about pressure to use substances."*
3. Provide support that increases opportunities to reduce risk factors or enhance protective factors	Youth development activities build connection and belonging during the school day. The PLUS Team promotes the wellness center with QR code self-referral campaigns and reduces stigma. PLUS students do not counsel or mediate.	*"PLUS activities will build connection during the school day, and the PLUS Team will promote the wellness center through QR code self-referral campaigns at [schools]."*
4. Increase access, reduce barriers and improve connections between systems and services	The wellness center liaison role connects students to services. Cycle reports connect school data to the district's MTSS and PBIS teams.	*"The PLUS Team will serve as a liaison between students and the wellness center. Cycle reports will reach the MTSS team so it can adjust supports."*
5. Change consequences, **6. Change physical design** and **7. Educate and inform about policies** that reduce access and availability	PLUS cycle data can inform these strategies, and the coalition's law enforcement, business and government sectors lead them. Hemet Unified PLUS students presented to the Hemet City Council in 2014 and 2015 in support of a tobacco ban in city parks, which passed in March 2015.	*"PLUS cycle data will inform the coalition's policy and environmental work. PLUS Team members may present findings to [city council or school board] when the coalition's policy workgroup invites them."*

THE DFC CORE MEASURES

DFC ASKS FOR	WHERE PLUS FITS	SAMPLE LANGUAGE
Core measures every two years: past 30-day use, perception of risk, perception of parental disapproval and perception of peer disapproval, for alcohol, tobacco, marijuana and prescription drugs, in at least three grades between 6 and 12	Direction is not presented as a source of DFC core measures. The coalition's evaluator chooses the approved survey. Direction gives schools local data every month between core measure years.	*"The coalition will collect DFC core measures in grades [7, 9 and 11] using [approved survey]. Direction will provide monthly local data from each PLUS site between core measure years."*
A 12-month action plan with SMART objectives for at least two substances, each tied to risk and protective factors	PLUS work can appear as objectives with the PLUS Advisor, staff team and PLUS Team as responsible parties. Vaping is a delivery method, so name the substance (tobacco or marijuana).	*"By [May 2028], the PLUS Team at [school] will run at least [two] schoolwide campaigns on tobacco and marijuana use built from cycle data. Risk factor: perception of risk."*
Monitoring the work plan and sharing findings	Cycle reports document what each school did and what the next cycle showed.	*"Each month's cycle report will document PLUS activities, reach and results for the coalition's work plan monitoring."*

BUDGET LANGUAGE

LINE	SAMPLE BUDGET JUSTIFICATION
PLUS Advisor, 0.1 to 0.2 FTE (usually district match)	"[District] contributes a [0.2] FTE PLUS Advisor at [school] from its general fund as non-federal match. The time covers the PLUS class section and collaboration with the PBIS, MTSS and school safety teams." A 0.1 FTE covers the class section and can get the job done. PLUS recommends 0.2 FTE because the added 0.1 lets the Advisor serve on those teams and bring each cycle's data to them.
PLUS Program, first year ($3,495 per site)	"Funds the 2-Day PLUS Program Development Training for a staff team of up to four, the online subscription to Direction and the activity resource database, the PLUS curriculum and one conference registration."

LINE	SAMPLE BUDGET JUSTIFICATION
PLUS Program, each year after ($1,495 per site with a three-year agreement)	"Continues the subscription, the annual conference registration and one 2-Day training registration for a new staff member each year."
PLUS Advisor Institute ($1,495 registration plus lodging and travel)	"Prepares the PLUS Advisor to teach the PLUS class and lead its activities through the year. The Institute is held each June in Temecula."

Writer's note. The coalition must match 100 percent of the federal share from non-federal sources. Federal funds, including federal funds passed through the state, cannot count as match, so fund the district's match from a non-federal source such as the general fund. No more than 10 percent of the federal award can go to data collection and evaluation, so ask your CDC grants contact whether any part of the PLUS subscription counts toward that limit. Research, equipment and harm reduction services are unallowable. Check every line against the current notice.

Writer's note. The full sample application for a fictional coalition, the Rio Alto Community Prevention Coalition, on the Funding PLUS page shows these pieces assembled into one application. Prices are from plusprogram.org/costs. Confirm them before you finalize the budget.

SOURCES

- Drug-Free Communities at a glance (CDC)
- CDC-RFA-CE-26-0061 notice of funding opportunity (PDF)
- DFC Support Program NEW (Year 1), CDC-RFA-CE-27-0058 forecast, Simpler.Grants.gov
- ONDCP announces FY 2026 Drug-Free Communities and CARA Local Drug Crisis grant awards (The White House, September 2026)
- FY 2026 Strategic Prevention Framework Partnerships for Success notice (SAMHSA, PDF)
- PLUS Program Costs