PLUS PROGRAM · SAMPLE GRANT · NONPROFIT PARTNERSHIP

SAMPLE ELEVATE YOUTH CALIFORNIA GRANT

LADERO YOUTH POWER COLLECTIVE AND SAN LADERO UNIFIED

SAMPLE APPLICATION FOR A FICTIONAL SCHOOL. FOR ILLUSTRATION ONLY.

ABOUT THIS SAMPLE

This sample is written for a fictional nonprofit, the Ladero Youth Power Collective, and its fictional school district partner, San Ladero Unified School District. Every local figure in it is invented. The PLUS Program and Direction facts are accurate. Writer's notes appear in quoted boxes after each major section.

Elevate Youth California (EYC) is a state grant funded by the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) and administered on its behalf by The Center at Sierra Health Foundation (The Center). It is funded by Proposition 64 cannabis tax revenue through the Youth Education, Prevention, Early Intervention and Treatment Account. EYC funds youth substance use prevention through policy, systems, and environmental change. It invests in leadership development and civic engagement for youth of color and 2S/LGBTQIA+ youth ages 12 to 26 in communities disproportionately affected by the war on drugs. Only a 501(c)(3) community-based or Tribal organization with established community relationships may apply. A school district cannot apply. It can take part as the nonprofit's partner. The most recent round, Cohort 8 Standard Track, offered about $44 million with awards of up to $1,000,000. Applications closed September 21, 2026. Awards are expected in December 2026, and the performance period runs January 1, 2027 to December 31, 2029. No match is required. DHCS has not announced the next cohort, so writers must confirm its timing on grants.ca.gov and the EYC website.

PLUS fits EYC because it gives young people a real role in finding the problems on their campus and leading the response. The nonprofit carries that student voice beyond the school. When the PLUS Team's data points to a community condition, such as vaping and cannabis smoke in the parks where students gather, the nonprofit helps youth turn the finding into a policy, systems, or environmental change campaign.

> **Writer's note.** In EYC the nonprofit is the applicant and the fiscal lead. The district is a partner. Write the application in the nonprofit's voice. Show that the nonprofit already has relationships in the community and that the district has agreed in writing to its role. The section headings below follow the required components DHCS lists for Cohort 8. Use the exact section names and order in the current Request for Applications when it is released.

PROJECT SUMMARY

The Ladero Youth Power Collective requests $815,716 over three years to prevent youth substance use in San Ladero through youth leadership, civic engagement, and policy, systems, and environmental change. The Collective will partner with San Ladero Unified to run the PLUS Program at San Ladero High School and Sycamore Middle School. PLUS is an evidence-based school climate program that uses youth participatory action research. Each month the PLUS Team surveys a new sample of the student body with Direction, runs a student-facilitated Forum, and plans schoolwide activities in response to what students report.

The Collective will lead the work that reaches past the campus. It will host annual youth listening sessions, employ PLUS alumni ages 18 to 26 as youth organizers, and support a youth-led campaign for a city ordinance that makes San Ladero parks and the downtown transit center free of tobacco, vaping, and cannabis smoke. The district will fund a 0.2 FTE PLUS Advisor at each school. EYC funds will pay for the Collective's staff and youth work, PLUS training and subscriptions, and the campaign.

APPLICANT ORGANIZATION AND COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

The Ladero Youth Power Collective is a 501(c)(3) community-based organization founded in 2016. It runs after-school leadership programs, a weekly 2S/LGBTQIA+ youth group, and a summer civic academy for youth ages 14 to 24. It served 410 young people in 2025. Its staff and board include former participants who grew up in San Ladero.

The Collective has worked with San Ladero Unified since 2019. It co-hosts the district's annual student voice summit and staffs a youth table at the district's LCAP community meetings. It also sits on the city's parks and recreation advisory committee. These relationships give the Collective a path from what students report at school to the people who make decisions in the city.

> **Writer's note.** EYC requires established and trusted community relationships. Name them. Give years, programs, and the places where your organization already sits at the table. If your organization has a fiscal sponsor, explain the arrangement.

COMMUNITY AND POPULATION OF FOCUS

San Ladero is a city of about 62,000 residents in the Inland Empire. All figures below are invented for this sample.

MEASURE	RESULT	SOURCE AND YEAR
Students who identify as Latino, Black, Native American, or Pacific Islander	88 percent	District enrollment data, 2025 to 2026
Students who qualify for free or reduced-price meals	79 percent	Same
Past 30-day vaping, grade 11	16 percent	District administration of the California Healthy Kids Survey, 2025 to 2026
Past 30-day cannabis use, grade 11	12 percent	Same
Students who feel connected to school, grade 9	52 percent	Same
Adult cannabis possession arrests per 1,000 residents before 2016	Twice the county rate	County justice data, 2012 to 2015
Licensed tobacco and cannabis retailers within 1,000 feet of a park	14	City business license records, 2026

San Ladero was policed heavily for drug offenses before Proposition 64. Many families still carry the effects of those arrests. Young people in the Collective's listening sessions in 2025 described smoke and vaping in the parks after school. They said the parks are where they go because there are few other safe places. Students in the Collective's 2S/LGBTQIA+ group described feeling isolated at school and said that isolation made vaping feel like a way to belong.

> **Writer's note.** Show that your community is one disproportionately affected by the war on drugs and that your project centers youth of color and 2S/LGBTQIA+ youth. Use local data and the words young people used in your own listening sessions. Name the risk factors your project will reduce, such as disconnection from school, and the protective factors it will build.

PROGRAM DESIGN

YOUTH LEADERSHIP IN THE SCHOOLS THROUGH PLUS

PLUS (Peer Leaders Uniting Students) is an evidence-based school climate program used in California schools for about 25 years. It uses youth participatory action research. Students gather and analyze data about their own school and lead the response alongside adults. It is grounded in youth development, the resiliency framework, and the Safe Schools Initiative direction that students have a role and responsibility in sustaining a safe school.

School climate is the pattern of experiences that students, staff, and families have on campus. PLUS looks at risk factors such as bullying, exclusion, harassment, fights, and vaping. It also builds protective factors

such as connection, belonging, and caring relationships.

At each school the PLUS Team is a class of 25 to 30 students in a dedicated class section. The Advisor selects the students to reflect the student body. The team is not elected and has no officers. An adult PLUS staff team guides the work at each site. It includes an administrator, a counselor or PBIS lead, and the Advisor.

PLUS runs a 30-day cycle nine times a year. An August pre-cycle teaches students the process, and Cycle 1 begins in September.

1. **Protective factors.** The PLUS Team leads youth development activities during the school day that build connection and belonging.
2. **Data integration.** Direction surveys a new representative sample of less than 10 percent of the campus with the same questions each cycle. It measures the student body, not individual students. A student-facilitated Forum then gathers qualitative data from 40 to 50 high school students, or 25 to 30 middle school students. A new group attends each month. Students identify the issues, how those issues affect students, and what can be done. The Forum names the top four critical issues.
3. **Action planning.** Students review both kinds of data and plan the activities the campus needs. A cycle report goes to the principal, counselors, PBIS and MTSS teams, and the district office.
4. **Engagement.** Students carry out the activities with the campus. They share the data with the school community and measure again the next cycle.

Information moves up from the PLUS class to the site administrator, the MTSS and PBIS teams, the district office, and the school board. Decisions come back down. PLUS curriculum aligns with the California State Seal of Civic Engagement.

The PLUS Team also serves as a liaison to each school's wellness center. Students run QR code campaigns, share self-referral forms, and work to reduce stigma about asking for help. The PLUS Team does not counsel or mediate. Forums focus on how students interact on campus, including bullying, harassment, exclusion, and isolation.

SOCIAL JUSTICE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

The Collective will use social justice youth development in all programming, as EYC asks. In practice that means three things. Young people study the conditions in their own community, including the history of drug enforcement in San Ladero. They connect personal experiences to the systems that shape them. They act together to change those systems.

PLUS gives this approach a structure in the schools. The PLUS Team works from data the students gather themselves, and the Forum asks students what can be done. The Collective builds on that in its after-school civic academy. There, PLUS Team members and other youth learn how city decisions are made, study local ordinances, and practice public testimony.

POLICY, SYSTEMS, AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE

The Collective will support youth-led campaigns that grow out of PLUS Team findings. The project plans one campaign of each kind. Youth will choose the final targets after the first year of PLUS data and listening sessions.

TYPE OF CHANGE	PLANNED CAMPAIGN	HOW PLUS DATA INFORMS IT	COLLECTIVE ROLE
Policy	City ordinance making parks and the downtown transit center free of tobacco, vaping, and cannabis smoke	Forums and Direction results on where students are exposed to smoke and vaping	Civic academy training, testimony preparation, meetings with council members, coalition with parents and faith groups
Systems	District adds a student data report from each PLUS cycle to its quarterly school board update	Cycle reports already move up to the district office	Supports youth presenters at board meetings
Environmental	Wellness center promotion that reduces stigma about substance use services at both schools	PLUS Team QR code and self-referral campaigns	Brings community health partners to family events

The ordinance campaign follows a model that has worked before. Hemet Unified PLUS students helped win a city ordinance banning tobacco in Hemet city parks. They presented to the Hemet City Council in 2014 and 2015, and the ordinance passed in March 2015.

> **Writer's note.** EYC funds change at the level of policy, systems, and environment, not only programs. Show how school data becomes a community campaign and who leads each step. Keep the roles clear. The PLUS Team finds the patterns on campus. The nonprofit leads the civic work in the community. Let youth choose the final campaign targets from their own data. Check the RFA and federal tax rules on lobbying by 501(c)(3) organizations before you budget for advocacy.

ANNUAL YOUTH LISTENING SESSIONS

EYC asks grantees to hold listening sessions each year with youth and young adults about prevention efforts. The Collective will hold three sessions each spring.

1. A session for PLUS Team members from both schools, held after school at the Collective's center.
2. A session for 2S/LGBTQIA+ youth ages 14 to 26, held with the Collective's weekly youth group.
3. A community session for young adults ages 18 to 26, including PLUS alumni.

Youth organizers will co-facilitate each session. The Collective will share a summary with the PLUS staff teams and the district. Session results will shape the next year's work plan and campaign targets.

> **Writer's note.** Describe who will attend, where, and how the results will change your work. Include the young people your program is meant to reach, not only those already active in it.

PARTNERSHIPS AND ROLES

The Collective is the applicant and fiscal lead. San Ladero Unified is the school partner under a signed memorandum of understanding. The MOU names both PLUS sites, the district's commitment to the 0.2 FTE Advisor at each site, and how aggregate data is shared. No student names or records leave the district.

PARTNER	ROLE	WHO PAYS
Ladero Youth Power Collective	Applicant and fiscal lead; youth organizers; civic academy; listening sessions; campaigns; evaluation	EYC
San Ladero Unified	Runs the PLUS class at two schools; funds the 0.2 FTE Advisor at each site; brings cycle data to PBIS and MTSS teams and the district office	District general fund
PLUS Program (PCE Solutions)	2-Day PLUS Program Development Training; PLUS curriculum; online subscription with Direction and the activity resource database; Advisor Institute	EYC through the Collective
San Ladero Family Health Center	Wellness center partner; family event health information	In-kind
Faith and parent groups	Support for the ordinance campaign	In-kind

> **Writer's note.** Show who pays for what. EYC pays the nonprofit's work and, where the RFA allows, PLUS materials and training. The district pays the Advisor. That shared investment shows reviewers the district wants this work to last.

WORK PLAN AND TIMELINE

WHEN	ACTIVITY	RESPONSIBLE
January to February 2027	Sign MOU; hire youth organizers; set up evaluation	Collective; district

WHEN	ACTIVITY	RESPONSIBLE
February 2027	2-Day PLUS Program Development Training for both PLUS staff teams	District; PLUS trainers
March to April 2027	Master schedule includes both PLUS class sections; Advisors select PLUS Teams	Principals; Advisors
April 2027	First annual youth listening sessions	Collective
June 2027	Both Advisors attend the PLUS Advisor Institute in Temecula	Advisors
July 2027	Summer civic academy	Collective
August 2027	PLUS pre-cycle at both schools	Advisors; PLUS Teams
September 2027 to May 2028	Cycles 1 to 9; cycle reports to site teams and district	PLUS Teams; PLUS staff teams
Fall 2027	Youth organizers lead first family evening Forums with the PLUS Teams	Collective; PLUS Teams
Spring 2028	Listening sessions; youth select campaign targets	Collective; youth
2028 to 2029	Ordinance campaign: research, coalition building, council presentations	Youth organizers; civic academy youth
September 2028 to May 2029	Cycles 1 to 9, second year	PLUS Teams
Fall 2029	Cycles 1 to 4, third year; final listening sessions; sustainability plan	All partners
Every six months	Progress and financial reports to EYC	Collective

The Collective will take part in technical assistance hosted by The Center, cooperate with the external EYC evaluation, and attend at least two one-day regional convenings during the award period.

> **Writer's note.** Keep the PLUS calendar real. The class needs the winter 2-Day training, a spring master schedule, and team selection before it can open in August. A January award start leaves the spring for planning and listening sessions.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND SUCCESS INDICATORS

The objectives below follow the success indicators DHCS lists for EYC. Baselines and targets are invented.

GOAL	OBJECTIVE	BASELINE	TARGET
Progress toward policy, systems, and environmental change goals	Youth present the park and transit center ordinance to the city council	None	At least two council presentations by December 2029
Community-level change	The city adopts the ordinance, or the council directs staff to draft it	Not adopted	Adopted or in drafting by December 2029
Systems change	PLUS cycle data appears in the district's quarterly board update	0 of 4 updates	4 of 4 updates each school year from 2028
Increased knowledge of substance use and prevention	Civic academy and PLUS Team youth show gains on a pre and post knowledge check	Set in summer 2027	25 percent average gain
Reduced stigma around substance use services	Wellness center self-referrals at both schools	140 per year (2025 to 2026)	200 per year by 2028 to 2029
Youth engagement	Youth ages 12 to 26 take part in PLUS, the civic academy, or listening sessions	410 per year	600 per year by 2029

EVALUATION

EYC asks for a work plan with monitoring and evaluation of youth engagement, prevention activities, policy, systems, and environmental change, and participant outcomes. It asks for quantitative and qualitative methods. The Collective will use the following.

MEASURE	TOOL	HOW OFTEN	WHO REVIEWS
School climate and vaping items at each school	Direction	Every 30-day cycle	PLUS Teams; PLUS staff teams; Collective
Top four critical issues	Forum summary in the cycle report	Every 30-day cycle	PLUS staff teams; MTSS and PBIS teams
Youth empowerment and youth-adult partnership	University of Oregon Youth Empowerment Questionnaire and Youth-Adult Partnership Questionnaire, hosted in Direction	Fall and spring	Collective evaluator
Campaign milestones	Campaign log of meetings, testimony, and council actions	Monthly	Youth organizers; project director

MEASURE	TOOL	HOW OFTEN	WHO REVIEWS
Listening session themes	Session notes coded for themes	Each spring	Collective evaluator; youth
Wellness center self-referrals	Counts from wellness center staff	Each semester	District; Collective
Participation by age group	Collective attendance records	Monthly	Project director

Direction is anonymous and COPPA compliant. It collects no personal information from students. It measures the student body rather than individual students. The Collective will cooperate fully with the external EYC evaluation and share its data as requested.

> **Writer's note.** Use both kinds of data and show youth helping to interpret it. PLUS already produces monthly quantitative and qualitative data at each school. Add measures for the community campaign, which happens outside the school.

THREE-YEAR BUDGET

EYC REQUEST

LINE ITEM	YEAR 1 (2027)	YEAR 2 (2028)	YEAR 3 (2029)	TOTAL
Project director, 0.5 FTE at $90,000	$45,000	$45,000	$45,000	$135,000
Youth civic engagement coordinator, 1.0 FTE	$65,000	$65,000	$65,000	$195,000
Youth organizers ages 18 to 26, two at 0.5 FTE ($22 per hour, 1,040 hours each)	$45,760	$45,760	$45,760	$137,280
Fringe benefits, 25 percent of salaries	$38,940	$38,940	$38,940	$116,820
PLUS Program, two sites (first year $3,495 each; then $1,495 each with a three-year agreement)	$6,990	$2,990	$2,990	$12,970
PLUS Advisor Institute, two Advisors (registration $1,495, lodging $750, travel $250 each)	$4,990	$0	$0	$4,990
Annual youth listening sessions	$6,000	$6,000	$6,000	$18,000
Civic academy and campaign materials, translation	$12,000	$12,000	$12,000	$36,000
Family evening Forums, interpretation, childcare	$5,000	$5,000	$5,000	$15,000

LINE ITEM	YEAR 1 (2027)	YEAR 2 (2028)	YEAR 3 (2029)	TOTAL
Travel to regional convenings	$1,500	$1,500	$1,500	$4,500
Local evaluation support	$15,000	$15,000	$15,000	$45,000
Wellness center stigma reduction materials	$4,000	$4,000	$4,000	$12,000
Youth transportation to council and board meetings	$3,000	$3,000	$3,000	$9,000
Total direct costs	**$253,180**	**$244,190**	**$244,190**	**$741,560**
Indirect costs, 10 percent of direct (illustrative)	$25,318	$24,419	$24,419	$74,156
Total EYC request	**$278,498**	**$268,609**	**$268,609**	**$815,716**

DISTRICT CONTRIBUTION (NOT CHARGED TO EYC)

LINE ITEM	2027 TO 2028	2028 TO 2029	FALL 2029	TOTAL IN PERFORMANCE PERIOD
PLUS Advisor, 0.2 FTE at each of two sites (illustrative $120,000 salary and benefits, $24,000 per site per year)	$48,000	$48,000	$24,000	$120,000

BUDGET NARRATIVE

Project director ($135,000). The director manages the grant, the district partnership, reporting to EYC, and the regional convenings.

Youth civic engagement coordinator ($195,000). The coordinator runs the civic academy, supports the ordinance campaign, and works with the PLUS Advisors to connect PLUS Team findings to community action.

Youth organizers ($137,280). Two PLUS alumni ages 18 to 26 co-facilitate listening sessions, mentor civic academy youth, and help lead the campaign. They are Collective employees, not school staff.

Fringe benefits ($116,820). Calculated at 25 percent of all salaries and wages.

PLUS Program ($12,970). In Year 1, each site's $3,495 includes the 2-Day PLUS Program Development Training for a staff team of up to four (a fifth attends free), the online subscription with unlimited Direction and the activity resource database, the PLUS curriculum, and one School Climate Conference or School Safety Conference registration. In Years 2 and 3, each site renews at $1,495 under a three-year agreement. Renewal includes the subscription, one conference registration, and one 2-Day training registration for one new staff member.

PLUS Advisor Institute ($4,990). The Institute is held each June in Temecula. It prepares each Advisor to teach the PLUS class and lead its activities. The 2-Day training prepares the staff team to run the program schoolwide. The Institute provides lunches and refreshments. Lodging and travel are shown at illustrative amounts. Renewal is every three years at $995, which falls after this award.

Listening sessions ($18,000). Venue, interpretation, materials, and youth participation costs for three sessions each spring.

Civic academy and campaign ($36,000). Training materials, printing, translation, and public meeting preparation for the ordinance campaign and board presentations.

Family evening Forums ($15,000). Interpretation, childcare, and materials so families can hear PLUS Team data and join the campaign.

Regional convenings ($4,500). Travel for staff and youth to the one-day convenings EYC requires.

Local evaluation ($45,000). Survey analysis, coding of listening session notes, and preparation of data for the external EYC evaluation and biannual reports.

Stigma reduction materials ($12,000). QR code posters, self-referral cards, and event materials for PLUS Team wellness center campaigns.

Youth transportation ($9,000). Transportation so youth can attend city council and school board meetings.

Indirect costs ($74,156). Shown at an illustrative 10 percent of direct costs.

District contribution ($120,000). The 0.2 FTE Advisor covers the dedicated PLUS class section plus 0.1 FTE for collaboration. That collaboration time lets the Advisor serve on the site's PBIS team, MTSS team, and school climate and safety committees. The Advisor brings each cycle's data to those teams and carries decisions back to the class. The collaboration time also lets the Advisor meet with the Collective's coordinator each month.

PLUS Team student leadership training is optional. The Collective will request a quote if the partners add it.

> **Writer's note.** Check every line against the RFA's allowable costs, indirect cost limit, and rules on youth incentives and pay. This sample shows indirect costs at an illustrative 10 percent because the rate was not confirmed. Confirm whether EYC funds may pay for training of district staff, such as the Advisor Institute. If not, move those costs to the district's side of the table.

SUSTAINABILITY

PLUS costs drop after the first year. Each site renews at $1,495 per year under a three-year agreement, and San Ladero Unified already pays the Advisor. The district has agreed to keep both PLUS class sections in its master schedule and to include PLUS cycle data in its LCAP engagement process. More

than 80 percent of PLUS schools renew each year. The Collective will seek local prevention funds and foundation support to continue the civic academy and youth organizer roles.

> **Writer's note.** Show what lasts after EYC funding. The district's class section and Advisor time keep PLUS running, and any policy the youth win remains in effect. Name the funders you will approach to continue the nonprofit's youth organizing.

EVIDENCE BASE

PLUS meets ESSA Tier 2 (moderate evidence). University research teams at UC Berkeley, the University of Oregon, and the University of Florida continue to study PLUS. A five-year University of Oregon study of student voice in California high schools, funded by the William T. Grant Foundation, is underway.

1. "Youth Participatory Action Research in the High School Curriculum: Education Outcomes for Student Participants in a District-Wide Initiative." *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness.* A quasi-experimental study with propensity score matching compared 153 PLUS participants in six high schools in one California district with similar peers. Participation significantly improved attendance. PDF
2. Abraczinskas, M., Kornbluh, M., Golden, A. R., Glende, J., Velez, V., Vines, E., and Ozer, E. J. (2022). "Preventing Bullying and Improving School Climate Through Integrating Youth Participatory Action Research Into School-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports." *Journal of Prevention and Health Promotion,* 3(2). PDF
3. Cohen, A. K., Ozer, E. J., Abraczinskas, M., Voight, A., Kirshner, B., and Devinney, M. (2019). "Opportunities for Youth Participatory Action Research to Inform School District Decisions." *Evidence and Policy.* PDF
4. Gauna, R. (2017). "The Peer Leaders Uniting Students (PLUS) Program: The Impact on School Climate, Student Engagement, and Student Mentoring." Doctoral dissertation, Concordia University Irvine. PDF

For PLUS pricing and planning, contact pce@pcesolutions.org or 866.403.9484, or visit plusprogram.org.

SOURCES

- Elevate Youth California: Cohort 8 Standard Track (grants.ca.gov)
- Elevate Youth California: Cohort 8 Standard Track, full listing (grants.ca.gov)
- Elevate Youth California: New Grants Strengthen Community-Based Prevention Across the State (DHCS)
- Prevention and Youth Branch (DHCS)