PLUS PROGRAM · SAMPLE GRANT · ATTENDANCE

SAMPLE LEARNING COMMUNITIES FOR SCHOOL SUCCESS PROGRAM GRANT

TAMARACK VALLEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

SAMPLE APPLICATION FOR A FICTIONAL SCHOOL. FOR ILLUSTRATION ONLY.

ABOUT THIS SAMPLE

This is a sample application written for a fictional district. Tamarack Valley Unified School District, its schools and its partners do not exist, and every local figure is invented for illustration. PLUS facts, such as pricing, research citations and how the 30-day cycle works, are accurate and may be used as written. Writer's notes in quoted boxes explain what each section needs to do and what to replace with your own district's story.

The Learning Communities for School Success Program (LCSSP) is a California Department of Education (CDE) grant funded by Proposition 47 savings. It supports evidence-based, nonpunitive programs that improve attendance, reduce chronic absenteeism and keep vulnerable students in school. Grants run three years. LEAs may receive up to $50 per enrolled student per year, with a three-year minimum of $30,000 and a maximum of $2,000,000, and a local match is required. Priority goes to LEAs with chronic absenteeism, dropout or suspension rates above the state average, significant foster youth enrollment or a location in a high-crime community. Cohort 10, three-year grants beginning in 2026-27, is closed. CDE has not posted a Cohort 11 Request for Applications (RFA). A future cohort depends on state funding being available. This sample uses a 2027 to 2030 grant period as an illustration.

PLUS fits LCSSP because it is an ESSA Tier 2 evidence-based practice for attendance and because it gives a district a monthly, student-generated read on why students disconnect from school.

> **Writer's note.** The sections below follow the elements CDE's posted forms and the program's statute require. The exact headings, scoring points and cost rules come from each cohort's RFA. When the next RFA is released, rename these sections to match it and follow its scoring rubric in order.

PROJECT ABSTRACT (FORM B)

Collaborative partners

COLLABORATIVE PARTNER	COLLABORATIVE ACTIVITY
Sagebrush Family Resource Center	Home visits with attendance specialists, family workshops, co-hosted evening family Forums
PLUS Program	PLUS curriculum, Direction, training for site staff teams and PLUS Advisors
County Office of Education	Restorative practices training

Brief description of the LEA's grant activities

Tamarack Valley Unified will reduce chronic absenteeism and keep its most vulnerable students connected to school. The district rate is 26.8 percent, and three schools exceed 24 percent. The project uses four nonpunitive strategies. Two attendance and family outreach specialists will run an early warning system and make home visits with Sagebrush Family Resource Center. A restorative practices coach will build alternatives to suspension at three focus schools. The district will pilot the PLUS Program at Kestrel Ridge Middle, Alder Creek Middle and Tamarack Valley High. PLUS is an ESSA Tier 2 evidence-based program shown to improve attendance. Each month a PLUS class surveys a representative sample of peers through Direction, holds a student Forum and reports why students are disconnecting. Students then lead campus activities that rebuild connection and belonging. A local evaluation will report attendance, chronic absenteeism, suspension, dropout and connectedness results to the board and CDE.

> **Writer's note.** Form B limits this description to 2,500 characters. List every partner who will sign a commitment letter and the activity each one contributes.

NEEDS OF PUPILS AND SCHOOLS

Tamarack Valley Unified serves 9,800 students at 14 schools. Its chronic absenteeism and suspension rates are both above the state average for 2025-26, and it serves 186 foster youth. The project serves every school through attendance outreach and the family resource partnership. Restorative practices and the PLUS pilot are concentrated at the three schools with the highest need.

MEASURE	DISTRICT	KESTREL RIDGE MS	ALDER CREEK MS	TAMARACK VALLEY HS	SOURCE
Chronic absenteeism	26.8 percent	29.5 percent	24.1 percent	31.2 percent	California School Dashboard, 2025-26
Suspension rate	4.6 percent	6.2 percent	5.4 percent	5.9 percent	California School Dashboard, 2025-26
Four-year cohort dropout rate	8.7 percent			10.4 percent	DataQuest, 2025-26

MEASURE	DISTRICT	KESTREL RIDGE MS	ALDER CREEK MS	TAMARACK VALLEY HS	SOURCE
Students reporting school connectedness		49 percent	53 percent	44 percent	California Healthy Kids Survey, 2025-26 (grades 7 and 11)

Chronic absenteeism is highest among foster youth (41 percent) and students experiencing homelessness (44 percent).

In spring 2026 the district piloted Direction at the three focus schools with a representative sample of less than 10 percent of students at each school.

PILOT QUESTION (SPRING 2026)	KESTREL RIDGE MS	ALDER CREEK MS	TAMARACK VALLEY HS
In the last 30 days, I missed school because I did not want to be at school	31 percent	27 percent	38 percent
In the last 30 days, I felt left out by other students at school	36 percent	30 percent	33 percent

In listening sessions, students named feeling left out at lunch, conflict that starts on social media, not having an adult to check in with, and feeling too far behind to come back after missing several days.

The district's attendance letters and student information system show which students are missing school. They do not show why students across a campus are pulling away, and the annual Healthy Kids Survey arrives too late to adjust supports during the year. Tamarack Valley needs nonpunitive supports for students and families, and a monthly, student-generated measure of the campus conditions that drive absence.

> **Writer's note.** Show that your LEA meets at least one priority criterion and cite the state average for the same year. Disaggregate absenteeism by the priority populations you check on Form B. If you have not used Direction yet, describe the gap it would fill rather than inventing results.

PLANNED ACTIVITIES

STRATEGY	WHO IT REACHES	WHAT IT DOES
1. Attendance and family outreach	All schools	Two specialists run a tiered early warning system, call families at the first signs of a pattern and make home visits with Sagebrush
2. Restorative practices	Three focus schools	A district coach trains staff in restorative circles and reentry conferences as alternatives to suspension

STRATEGY	WHO IT REACHES	WHAT IT DOES
3. Family resource partnership	All schools	Sagebrush provides family case support and connects families to basic needs resources
4. PLUS Program pilot	Three focus schools	Students gather monthly data on why peers disconnect and lead campus activities that rebuild connection and belonging

PLUS PROGRAM PILOT

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. Strategies 1 to 3 respond to individual students and families. PLUS gives each focus school a schoolwide measure of the conditions behind absence and a student-led way to change them.

Tamarack Valley Unified is prioritizing student leadership by funding a dedicated PLUS class section at each focus school, where a PLUS Team of 25 to 30 students meets daily. The Advisor selects students to reflect the student body, including students who have struggled with attendance. Each school's PLUS staff team includes an assistant principal, a counselor and the PLUS Advisor.

The district funds each Advisor at 0.2 FTE as part of its match. That time covers the PLUS class section plus an additional 0.1 FTE for collaboration, so the Advisor can serve on the site attendance, MTSS and PBIS teams. The Advisor brings each cycle's data to those teams and carries their decisions back to the class.

Each PLUS Team runs a 30-day cycle nine times a year.

1. **Protective factors.** Students lead youth development activities during the school day that build connection and belonging, starting with lunch periods and welcoming students who return after an absence.
2. **Data integration.** Direction surveys a new representative sample of less than 10 percent of the campus with the same Attendance and Engagement questions each cycle. A student-facilitated Forum gathers qualitative data from 40 to 50 high school students or 25 to 30 middle school students, with a new group each month, and 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 and the attendance, MTSS and PBIS teams.
4. **Engagement.** Students carry out the activities with the campus, share the data with the school community and measure again the next cycle.

Attendance specialists receive each cycle report, so a campus condition students name, such as conflict at lunch, can be addressed for every student. Forum findings show the restorative practices coach where

conflicts between students are concentrated. Students do not mediate or counsel peers. PLUS Teams co-host an evening family Forum each semester with Sagebrush.

> **Writer's note.** The statute asks for evidence-based, nonpunitive programs. Describe each strategy in those terms and show how they work together as one project. Name your real teams and partners.

ALIGNMENT TO LCAP GOALS

Tamarack Valley's LCAP Goal 3 is to increase student engagement and attendance in a safe and welcoming school climate. The project supports its Priority 5 metrics (attendance, chronic absenteeism and dropout) and its Priority 6 metrics (suspension and local climate surveys). The specialists, coach and PLUS pilot are new services that do not exist in the current LCAP. Grant funds will increase and improve services and will not supplant existing funds.

> **Writer's note.** Quote your own LCAP goal and action numbers. Reviewers check that the connection is specific.

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

WHEN	ACTIVITY	RESPONSIBLE
Spring 2027	PLUS class sections added to the 2027-28 master schedule at the three focus schools. Advisors select PLUS Teams.	Principals and counselors
August 2027	Attendance specialists and restorative practices coach hired	Director of Student Services
Fall 2027	PLUS staff teams attend the 2-Day PLUS Program Development Training. Pre-cycle for PLUS Teams.	Assistant principals and PLUS Advisors
November 2027 to May 2028	Seven 30-day cycles at each focus school	PLUS Advisors and PLUS Teams
June 2028	PLUS Advisors attend the PLUS Advisor Institute in Temecula	PLUS Advisors
Years 2 and 3	Nine 30-day cycles each year at each focus school	PLUS Advisors and PLUS Teams
Each June	Annual review of outcomes. Report to the board and CDE.	Director of Student Services

Year 1 runs seven cycles because training follows the award.

Writer's note. Build the timeline around the grant period in the RFA. Trainings are held regionally throughout the year; check plusprogram.org for current dates.

GOALS AND OUTCOME MEASURES

Baselines are from 2025-26. Targets are for June 2030.

- **Chronic absenteeism:** the district rate will decrease from 26.8 percent to 21.5 percent, and the rate for foster youth from 41 percent to 33 percent.
- **Focus schools:** chronic absenteeism will decrease at Kestrel Ridge from 29.5 to 23.5 percent, at Alder Creek from 24.1 to 19.0 percent and at Tamarack Valley High from 31.2 to 25.0 percent.
- **Suspensions:** rates at the three focus schools will each decrease by at least 1.4 percentage points.
- **Dropout:** the cohort dropout rate at Tamarack Valley High will decrease from 10.4 percent to 8.0 percent.
- **Connection:** students reporting they missed school because they did not want to be there will decrease by at least 8 percentage points at each focus school on Direction, and connectedness on the Healthy Kids Survey will increase by at least 8 points.

Writer's note. Use the outcome measures your RFA requires, tied to your LCAP metrics. Set realistic targets from your own baselines.

EVALUATION PLAN

The Director of Student Services will lead the local evaluation with a contracted data analyst.

WHAT WE MEASURE	TOOL	HOW OFTEN
Attendance and chronic absenteeism by school and student group	Student information system and Dashboard	Monthly and each year
Suspensions and dropout	District discipline data and DataQuest	Monthly and each year
Why students miss school and feel left out	Direction pulse survey	Each cycle
Critical issues identified by students	Student Forum findings	Each cycle
School climate and youth-adult partnership	University-developed Likert surveys in Direction	August and May
PLUS fidelity	Cycle reports and activities completed	Each cycle

Each month the attendance teams will compare Direction and Forum results with attendance and discipline data. Each June the district will report results to the Board of Education and to CDE, as the grant award requires. Direction surveys are anonymous and comply with the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act, and no personal information is collected from students.

> **Writer's note.** Follow the RFA's reporting schedule and data templates, and name the people who will do the analysis.

EVIDENCE BASE

PLUS meets ESSA Tier 2 (moderate evidence) for attendance. A third-party quasi-experimental study compared 153 students in a year-long PLUS class in six California high schools with similar peers who did not participate. Participation significantly improved attendance. University research teams at UC Berkeley, the University of Oregon and the University of Florida continue to study PLUS.

- 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.
- 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).

> **Writer's note.** Give evidence for every strategy in your project, not only PLUS.

PROJECT BUDGET (ATTACHMENT 2)

Tamarack Valley's enrollment of 9,800 students allows up to $1,470,000 over three years. The district requests $1,421,940. Staff costs are illustrative and held flat.

LINE ITEM	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	TOTAL
Attendance and family outreach specialists, 2.0 FTE	$210,000	$210,000	$210,000	$630,000
Restorative practices coach, 1.0 FTE	$130,000	$130,000	$130,000	$390,000
Restorative practices training and materials	$20,000	$20,000	$20,000	$60,000
Family resource partner contract	$90,000	$90,000	$90,000	$270,000
PLUS Program pilot, three sites (detail below)	$17,970	$4,485	$4,485	$26,940
Local evaluation	$15,000	$15,000	$15,000	$45,000

LINE ITEM	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	TOTAL
Total LCSSP request	**$482,970**	**$469,485**	**$469,485**	**$1,421,940**

PLUS Program pilot detail

LINE ITEM	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	TOTAL
PLUS Program first year, 3 sites at $3,495	$10,485			$10,485
PLUS Program subscription, three-year agreement, 3 sites at $1,495		$4,485	$4,485	$8,970
PLUS Advisor Institute: registration, lodging and travel for 3 Advisors	$7,485			$7,485
PLUS grant-funded subtotal	**$17,970**	**$4,485**	**$4,485**	**$26,940**

Local match

MATCH SOURCE	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	TOTAL
PLUS Advisors, 0.2 FTE at 3 sites, district general fund	$72,000	$72,000	$72,000	$216,000
Attendance data staff, 0.25 FTE, in-kind	$25,000	$25,000	$25,000	$75,000
Total match	**$97,000**	**$97,000**	**$97,000**	**$291,000**

The match is 20.5 percent of the request, above the 20 percent minimum in the statute. PLUS prices are from the PLUS Costs page.

> **Writer's note.** Three sites is below the five-site threshold for PLUS Districtwide, so each site is priced at the PLUS Program level. Confirm the match percentage and cost rules in the current RFA. Use your district's salary schedule for every staff line.

BUDGET NARRATIVE

Non-PLUS strategies ($1,395,000). The attendance specialists run the early warning system for all 14 schools and make home visits with Sagebrush. The restorative practices coach and training build alternatives to suspension at the three focus schools. The family resource contract funds case support and family workshops. The evaluation line funds the annual report to the board and CDE.

PLUS Program first year ($10,485 in Year 1). Funds, for each focus school, the 2-Day PLUS Program Development Training for a staff team of up to four, the first year of the online subscription with unlimited Direction and the activity resource database, the PLUS curriculum and one conference registration.

PLUS Advisor Institute ($7,485 in Year 1). Sends each school's PLUS Advisor to the PLUS Advisor Institute, held each June in Temecula, to prepare to teach the PLUS class and lead its activities. Each Advisor's cost is $1,495 for registration, an estimated $750 for three nights of lodging and an estimated $250 for travel.

PLUS Program subscription ($8,970 in Years 2 and 3). Continues each school's subscription under a three-year agreement at $1,495 per site, including a 2-Day training registration for one new staff member each year.

PLUS Advisors, 0.2 FTE (district match, $216,000). The district funds 0.2 FTE of a certificated teacher at each focus school to serve as PLUS Advisor. The time covers the PLUS class section plus an additional 0.1 FTE for collaboration on the attendance, MTSS and PBIS teams. This collaboration time makes the Advisor part of the school's network of educational partners and is how student data reaches the adults who plan attendance supports.

> **Writer's note.** Tie every line to a strategy and a goal, and make sure every match line can be documented in your accounting system.

SUSTAINABILITY

The district funds the PLUS Advisor time as its match during the grant, so the PLUS class sections are already part of the district budget when the grant ends. The ongoing PLUS cost is the annual subscription of $1,495 per site. If the district expands PLUS to five or more schools, it will move to PLUS Districtwide pricing. The board will decide in spring 2030 whether to continue the attendance specialists and restorative practices coach with LCFF supplemental and concentration funds, based on the evaluation. More than 80 percent of PLUS schools renew each year.

> **Writer's note.** Name the funding source your district will use after the grant and show which costs it already carries.

SOURCES

- CDE Funding Profile: LCSSP Cohort 10
- CDE Request for Applications page: LCSSP Cohort 10
- CDE Form B, Project Abstract (PDF)
- Senate Bill 527 (2016), Education Code sections 33430 to 33436
- PLUS Program Costs