

November 20, 2025



WestEd 

Proposals 101 Series for School and District Leaders

Session 2: Getting Started and Setting Yourself Up for Success



Meet Today's WestEd Team



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Welcome!

This session is hosted by the California Stronger Connections Technical Assistance Center.

We provide support to local educational agencies to foster safe, healthy, and supportive learning environments.

Please respond to a quick poll about any additional topics you'd like to learn about.





Proposals 101 for School and District Leaders: Turning Strong Ideas Into Funded Projects

- A learning series on proposal writing, offering flexible participation and follow-up discussion opportunities.
- Upcoming sessions:
 - **Session 3: Designing With Impact: Logic Models and Data Tools** (December 4, 2025: 1:00-2:00 p.m. PT)
 - **Session 4: Telling Your Compelling Story: Blending Data and Narrative** (December 11, 2025: 1:00-2:00 p.m. PT)
 - **Session 5: Pulling It All Together: Case Studies, Feedback, and Final Review** (January 15, 2026: 1:00-2:00 p.m. PT)

Today's Objectives

- Learn techniques for identifying both needs and strengths.
- Identify key data to collect early for stronger alignment later.
- Explore practical strategies for building partnerships and planning for sustainability.

Teri's Tip

Write to the rubric,
not just the narrative

Lisa's Tip

Pay attention to
the language and
the organization of
the RFA

Hilva's Tip

Check that all the
required information
is included, in a
logical order



Teri's Tip

Behind every data
point is a student, a
classroom, and a
community with a
story to tell

Hilva's Tip

Consider how you
use space in your
application to meet
the scoring
requirements

Grant Writing Tips From CDE Reviewers



Lisa's Tip

Be sure the data
you are sharing
relates to the story
you are trying to
tell

Lisa's Tip

Set a realistic and
clear budget



Teri's Tip

The strongest
applications are
those that reflect the
authentic voice of the
school and its
community



Lisa's Tip

Consider
sustainability
beyond the funding
you are applying
for

Teri's Tip

Include perspectives
and feedback from
the implementation
team for authenticity



Connecting to Your Priorities

Example: An RFA is available for "planning, implementation, and evaluation of activities in support of evidence-based, nonpunitive programs and practices to keep the state's most vulnerable pupils in school."

- What are your district/school/agency's current priorities?
- What do your existing plans (e.g. LCAP, School Plan for Student Achievement) include?



Connecting to Your Data

Example: You are looking for funding for a middle school with a priority to improve school climate and fair discipline practices. You see an opportunity to apply for funding focused on restorative practices...

- What data do you likely already have to tell your school's story?
- What additional data could you gather to help tell your school's story?



Types of Data

- Quantitative data
 - Focused on how many and how much; aims to count or express as numbers
 - Examples: test scores, school climate assessment responses, attendance rates
- Qualitative Data
 - Focused on how and why; aims to observe, understand, find themes
 - Examples: notes from focus groups with parents, interviews with teachers, or classroom observations

Quantitative Methods



Qualitative Methods



Needs Sensing Strategies

- Gather input from key interest holders
 - Methods: surveys, focus groups, interviews, listening sessions
- Go beyond surveys to make data meaningful
 - Analyze and synthesize findings, don't just collect responses
 - Use wonderings from surveys to guide additional listening

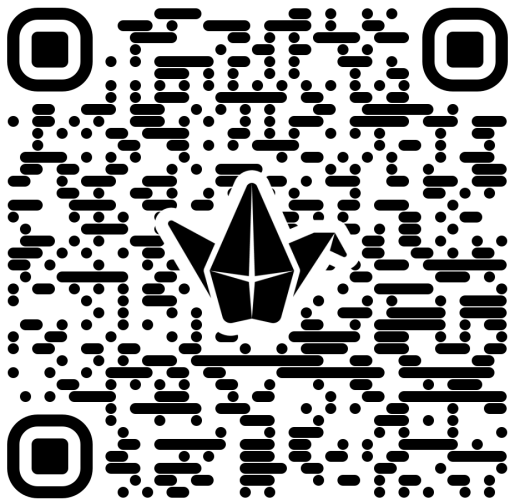
Needs Sensing Strategies

- Address common challenges
 - Low participation: simplify and incentivize input
 - Limited time: integrate into existing meetings
 - Data overload: focus on specific, needed insights

Telling Your Story

- Identify your school/district's strengths and needs
- Create a picture of your current activities and gaps
- Identify and build community partnerships

Tools to Prepare for Grant Writing



- Pick 1 or 2 tools from the Padlet to explore
- Think about how you could use this tool in your school/district
- Add any additional tools you have used

Planning for Sustainability

Example: You are looking to increase your parent engagement efforts, but your current funding has been allocated; you're looking to write a grant that adds to or enhances these activities.

- What is the full investment required?
- What gaps in resources exist or may impact this work?
- What opportunities for sustainment exist or could be cultivated?



Sustainability Pillars



Integrating Sustainability into Proposals

- Capacity building
 - Develop internal expertise (e.g., train-the-trainer)
 - Develop a system
- Systems thinking
 - Align funding with existing program or activity
- Resource leveraging
 - Describe how other funding sources have supported past work or current capacities
 - Identify current in-kind support



Key Takeaways

**Align
proposed
activities
with
existing
priorities**

**Use data
thoughtfully**

**Identify
strengths
and needs**

**Tell a
compelling
story**

**Get creative
with
capacity
and
sustainability**



More Opportunities for Learning and Connection

- **December 10 Wellness Mini-Session:** Mindfulness for a Busy Mind
- **December 11 Webinar:** Shifting Engagement Practices for Middle School



Learn more at strongerconnections.wested.org



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Thank you!

Contact Us:
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