

January 15, 2026



# Proposals 101 Series for School and District Leaders

Session 5: Pulling It All Together: Case Studies, Feedback, and Final Review



## 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.



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## Meet Today's WestEd Team



Jenny Betz



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

- A 5-part interactive learning series on proposal writing, offering flexible participation and follow-up discussion opportunities.
  - **Session 1: Understanding the Landscape: Insights from CDE Proposal Reviewers**  
(November 13, 2025)
  - **Session 2: Getting Started and Setting Yourself Up for Success**  
(November 20, 2025)
  - **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

- Review examples of strong proposal sections and analyze what made them effective.
- Apply a final checklist to ensure proposals are complete and competitive.
- Explore strategies for incorporating feedback and using supportive tech tools.

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## Reviewing Proposal Samples

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## Example Proposal

- CDE Restorative Justice Grant Program
- Real Grant, No longer Accepting Applications

Proposal Section	Maximum Points
Problem Statement	20
District Commitment and Capacity	20
Proposed Grant Activities	30
Measuring of Impact	20
Budget	10
	<b>Maximum Total Points: 100</b>



## Example Proposal

- These examples are adapted from text pulled directly from proposals CDE funded (with school information changed). [EXAMPLE 1]
- We have paired them with generated samples that do not meet high criteria in the rubric. [EXAMPLE 2]

Outstanding – 4-5	Good – 3	Fair – 2	Minimal 0-1
The applicant's response to the prompt is exceptionally clear, specific, detailed, relevant, and thorough.	The applicant's response to the prompt is sufficiently clear, specific, relevant, and provides adequate detail.	The applicant's response to the prompt is in some respects clear, specific, and relevant, but lacks detail.	The applicant's response to the prompt is minimal, insufficient, and vague.



## Statement of Problem and Purpose: EXAMPLE 1

RVUSD is facing a critical need to transform school climate and disciplinary practices. Chronic absenteeism stands at 18.9% districtwide, with notably higher rates in the upper grades. Suspension data is especially troubling: while the overall district suspension rate is 4.4%, both middle schools—Canyon Ridge Middle School (16%) and Riverbend Middle School (13.1%)—report significantly higher rates. Disaggregated data reveals stark inequities. At both middle schools, African American/Black students are suspended at a rate of 26.4%—five times the district average. Students with disabilities are disproportionately affected, contributing to the district's current Differentiated Assistance status: at Canyon Ridge Middle School alone, 23.2% of students with disabilities were suspended. Riverbend Middle School shows similar concerns, with suspension rates reaching 14.1% for socioeconomically disadvantaged students and 16.3% for White students.



## Statement of Problem and Purpose: EXAMPLE 2

RVUSD experiences challenges related to school climate and student discipline. The district has concerns about student attendance and reports issues with chronic absenteeism at some school sites. Suspension rates indicate that discipline remains an area of need, particularly at the secondary level. Certain student groups appear to be more impacted by disciplinary actions than others. These trends suggest the district would benefit from improved approaches to supporting student behavior and engagement.



## Statement of Problem and Purpose: COMPARISON

### EXAMPLE 1

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### EXAMPLE 2

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## District Commitment and Capacity: EXAMPLE 1

To date, RJ practices have been introduced informally by a small group of trained counselors, psychologists, administrators, and our district social worker. These early adopters have begun using tools like restorative conversations, reentry meetings, and community-building circles, but efforts remain fragmented. With this grant, we will transition from isolated pilot sites to an integrated model that reaches every school, staff member, and student.

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## District Commitment and Capacity: EXAMPLE 2

RVUSD is currently implementing restorative practices in various ways across the district. Some schools use restorative practices by having students complete written reflection packets after incidents and requiring them to attend administrative meetings before returning to class. In certain situations, students participate in behavior contracts and extended detention schedules that are intended to be restorative. Staff have also used restorative practices during disciplinary hearings by reviewing student behavior data and determining consequences through a structured decision-making process. While these strategies are used to address conflict, they are not implemented consistently, and there is no clear guidance on which restorative practices are being used or how they align with district discipline policies.



## District Commitment and Capacity: COMPARISON

### EXAMPLE 1

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### Proposed Grant Activities: EXAMPLE 1

RVUSD will implement key restorative justice best practices over a phased two-year period:

- Build a Strong Foundation: Core training for counselors, psychologists, and administrators will begin in Summer 2025. Site RJ planning teams will be formed to lead implementation.
- Engage the Entire School Community: Family and staff RJ info sessions at all sites will build trust and understanding. Students, classified staff, and parents will be included in ongoing planning.
- Provide Ongoing Professional Development: Training begins with student services and admin, expands to optional staff PD in Year 1, and full staff Tier 1 training in Year 2.



### Proposed Grant Activities: EXAMPLE 2

RVUSD will be doing restorative practices as part of the grant to help with discipline and school climate. The district plans to use different restorative strategies such as reflection activities, behavior discussions, and meetings that focus on expectations and consequences. Restorative circles may be used in classrooms or when there are discipline issues, and students may be asked to complete apology statements or service activities as part of the process. In some cases, peer mediation or check-ins with administrators will be used to address behavior. These restorative practices will be implemented as needed and adjusted depending on the situation and school site.



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## Measuring of Impact: EXAMPLE 1

### Key Metrics and Targets

- **Chronic Absenteeism:** Goal: Decrease districtwide rates by increasing student engagement and sense of belonging.
- **Attendance Rate:** Goal: Increase daily attendance among historically underserved student groups.
- **School Climate and Connectedness (via CHKS & internal surveys):** Goal: 10% improvement in student and staff perceptions of safety, respect, and belonging.
- **Restorative Practice Implementation:** Tracked Metrics: Number of classroom and community circles, reintegration meetings, student participation in Bridge Builders peer leadership, and staff participation in RJ PD.



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## Measuring of Impact: EXAMPLE 2

RVUSD will measure the impact of the proposed application by looking at different types of information related to student behavior and school climate. Data will be reviewed over time to see if there are improvements, and staff will discuss results during meetings. Attendance and discipline information may be used, along with other feedback from schools, to understand how the program is working. Surveys and reports will also be considered as part of the evaluation process. Overall, the district will use multiple methods to monitor progress and make adjustments as needed.

## Measuring of Impact: COMPARISON

### EXAMPLE 1

#### Key Metrics and Targets

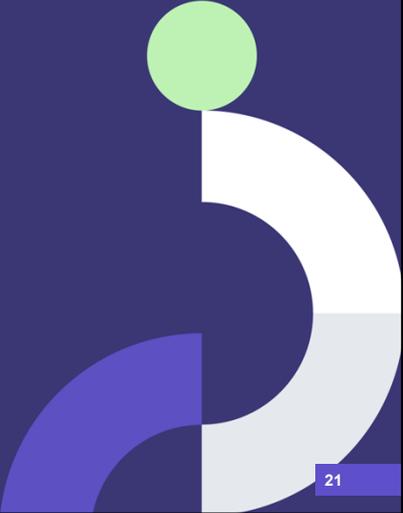
- Chronic Absenteeism: Goal: Decrease districtwide rates by increasing student engagement and sense of belonging.
- Attendance Rate: Goal: Increase daily attendance among historically underserved student groups.
- School Climate and Connectedness (via CHKS & internal surveys): Goal: 10% improvement in student and staff perceptions of safety, respect, and belonging.
- Restorative Practice Implementation: Tracked Metrics: Number of classroom and community circles, reintegration meetings, student participation in Bridge Builders peer leadership, and staff participation in RJ PD.

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# Using Generative AI to Edit and Review



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## Why Use Generative AI?

- Generative AI (e.g., ChatGPT, Claude, Copilot) can help with editing tasks and RFP alignment.
- You can use generative AI to focus on quality, clarity, and brevity.
- Generative AI does NOT know your school or and student (and it's not a real human)! Use to it compliment, not replace, human expertise.



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## How to Prompt Generative AI: Example ChatGPT

- **Clarity**
  - *Prompt:* “Edit this section for clarity. Keep my voice but make each sentence easier to understand.”
- **Flow**
  - *Prompt:* “Review this draft for logical flow and transitions.”
- **Length**
  - *Prompt:* “Shorten this text to 1,000 words without losing key meaning.”
- **Consistency**
  - *Prompt:* “Identify areas for improved consistency in tone, tense, formatting, and terminology. Suggest edits.”

## How to Prompt Generative AI: Example ChatGPT

- **Alignment with RFP Criteria**
  - “You are a grant reviewer. Compare the draft below to the RFP criteria provided. Identify:
    - Areas of strong alignment
    - Gaps or missing requirements
    - Sections that need clearer connections to funder priorities
    - Provide specific suggestions for improvement.”

### Best Practices

Paste RFP criteria first, then the draft section  
Review AI feedback alongside human judgment  
Use results to guide revisions, not replace decision-making



# Finalizing Your Submission



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## Creating a Submission Checklist

As you review an RFP, create a checklist directly from RFP such as:

- ✓ Scoring criteria (What earns the most points?) →
- ✓ Required sections, font size, and word limits
- ✓ Priority language and key terms
- ✓ Budget rules and allowable costs
- ✓ Attachments, assurances, and deadlines

Proposal Section	Maximum Points
Problem Statement	20
District Commitment and Capacity	20
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<b>Maximum Total Points: 100</b>	

**If it's required, scored, or emphasized it belongs on your checklist!**



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## Sample Submission Checklist: EXAMPLE

A complete GRANT application consists of the following components:

- File 1 – Application Packet (PDF)
  - Application Cover Sheet
  - Project Abstract
  - Application Narrative
  - Letter of Agreement (LOA) or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Partners
- File 2 – Attachment I: LEA and Site Participation Form (.xlsx)
- File 3 – Attachment II: Project Proposed Budget (.xls)



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## Before Submission

- Use your customized RFP checklist to complete a last-pass review:
  - Every requirement is clearly addressed
  - Scored criteria are easy for a reviewer to find
  - Language mirrors the RFP priorities and terms
  - Budget, narrative, and attachments align
  - Page limits, formatting, and file names are correct
  - All required signatures and assurances are included
- Final Check: “If I were a reviewer, could I quickly confirm this meets every requirement?”



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## Key Takeaways

Closely review the scoring criteria or rubric for your submission.

Have someone who has not worked on the proposal review/score the submission.

Use AI to check quality, clarity, and brevity (not to write your proposal!).

Create a checklist to use before turning in your final submission.

Ask yourself: "If I were a reviewer, could I quickly confirm this meets every requirement?"

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## More Opportunities for Learning and Connection



Learn more at [strongerconnections.wested.org](https://strongerconnections.wested.org)

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**Thank you!**

Contact Us:  
[strongerconnections@wested.org](mailto:strongerconnections@wested.org)

