# Middle School Foundation AcademiesRequest for Applications 2025–26 Cohort 9

**California Department of Education**



**Applications Due:**

**Monday, March 31, 2025**

**Administered by the:**High School Innovations and Initiatives Office
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## General Information

### Introduction

The California Department of Education (CDE) is accepting applications from local educational agencies (LEAs) for the Middle School Foundation Academies (MSFAs) Planning Grant program. The program aims to establish MSFAs to prepare students for participation in a complete, high-quality career technical education (CTE) pathway at the local high school.

Specifically, the program provides $350,000 to use as start-up funds for 14 middle school career academies. This one-time funding opportunity offers eligible LEAs $25,000 grants. The funding source for this grant comes from the Proposition 98 CTE Initiative that was included in the 2025–26 state budget.

## Program Description

### Grant Information

The MSFA Planning Grant provides one-time funding only. The MSFA Cohort 9 Planning Grant will award five points to schools that have a chronic absentee rate higher than the state average of 30 percent, as reported on the California School Dashboard web page at <https://www.caschooldashboard.org/reports/ca/2024>.

This application covers the grant period beginning July 1, 2025, and ending December 31, 2026.

### Desired Program Outcomes

The MSFA Planning Grant aims to provide middle grade students CTE and career exploration learning experiences. The program is outlined in the five elements described below.

**Element 1:** To develop academies at the middle school level, districts will implement the use of the California Career Resource Network (CalCRN) Career and College Readiness Lesson Plans, which align with the CTE Standards for Career Ready Practice, in grades five and six starting the 2025–26 school year. This will allow the students to develop a career ready skills foundation prior to entering middle school.

The middle school(s) will continue to implement the CalCRN Career and College Readiness Lesson Plans that will develop the students’ soft skills foundation throughout middle school.

The CalCRN Career and College Readiness Lesson Plans are designed for grades five through twelve. Although together they represent a sequence of learning modules, they also can be used individually and modified by the user as desired.

**Element 2:** The middle grade CTE instructors, in coordination with the high school CTE pathway instructors, will partner to develop a plan for establishing the MSFA model, including industry representation.

**Element 3:** Design a three-semester career and self-exploration sequence of courses:

1. One semester mini-CTE or CTE Wheel or modifications on these themes;
2. One semester introductory to CTE sector-specific content; and
3. One semester sector/pathway-specific content and the development of a Career Action Plan.

Schools, where appropriate, may integrate course activities into existing courses or advisories.

Schools will select CTE content area(s) that are the best fit for their region and align to the local high schools.

Examples include: Health Careers; Manufacturing; Culinary Arts; Industrial Technology; Arts, Media, and Entertainment; and Robotics, Game Design, and Coding.

**Element 4:** Provide at least four Leadership Seminars offered at various times and various locations throughout the state to teams of district and site educators. The Leadership Seminars will be developed collaboratively with middle grade CTE and high school CTE instructors and will provide information and background on career ready practices and programs for middle grade students.

Both middle grade and high school CTE instructors will support regional Middle Grade CTE by serving as an in-region contact for schools, teachers, and support staff.

Participants will be selected based on the strength of their application. Participants will be oriented to a planning process for developing strategies, program practices, timelines, marketing strategies, and identify potential inter-dependencies. The intent of the Leadership Seminars is to provide quick start assistance to teams of educators in planning and implementing effective and comprehensive strategies at the middle school level to help middle school students become career ready by the time they leave high school.

**Element 5:** Develop a coalition of industry partner(s) within each region that assist with providing work-based learning modules that will be used with the MSFAs.

**Chronic Absenteeism Rate:** List middle school’s absenteeism rate, as reported on the 2024 year on the California School Dashboard web page at <https://www.caschooldashboard.org/reports/ca/2024>.

### Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible for funds, applicants must meet the following requirements:

1. Be a school or charter school serving middle school grades based on the configuration at the LEA.
2. Commit to provide career planning and CTE experiences to grades five through eight students, or the middle school grades, based on the configuration at the LEA.
3. Provide a three-semester sequence of career exploration and CTE courses that are standards-based and developmentally appropriate for middle grade students. In addition, the CTE pathway must feed into one of the local high schools with a complete, high-quality CTE pathway program.
4. Collect and provide information and data as specified by the CDE.
5. Agree to protect the confidentiality of individual student information, including each student’s identity, consistent with state and federal statutes and regulations.
6. Agree to participate in disseminating models, lessons, experiences, and other relevant information about the programs and activities funded through this grant.
7. Participate in networking and sharing practices with other grantees of the MSFA Planning Grant.
8. Attend the Educating for Careers Conference in February 2026, or an alternative CTE conference or symposium.

### Program Requirements

Funds may be received only by California school districts, county offices of education, and charter schools that serve, or oversee schools serving students in grades five through eight, or the middle school grades based on the configuration at the LEA. Each applicant must be able to demonstrate that it is establishing a partnership with a local high school that has a complete, high-quality CTE pathway program. Such partnership will be clearly addressed in the application itself and confirmed by a letter of commitment.

### Matching Funds

Matching funds 1:1 is required. Any match (in-kind or cash) may be entered on the Budget Form (Appendix D).

### Use of Funds

Funds may be used for materials; subscriptions; workbooks; curricula; wages for release time or substitute staff to enable regular staff release time to work on program activities and objectives; costs directly associated with meetings between different site teachers and staff working on this project; travel; material development; professional development; equipment; computers; software; and supports.

Funds awarded shall be used to **supplement—not supplant—**federal and non-federal funds expended to implement the work described in the application.

## Application Process

### Program Timeline

January 31, 2025 – RFA Released

March 31, 2025 – Deadline for Applications submission

May 2025 – Grantees Announced

Appeals due at the CDE two weeks after grantees announced by the CDE.

### Grant Period

July 1, 2025 – Grant Begins

December 31, 2026 – Grant Ends

February 1, 2027 – Final Project Report Due

February 1, 2027 – End of Project Financial Expenditure Report Due

### Application Due Date

Applications must be **emailed on or before March 31, 2025.** The **complete** **digital signed copy** of all attached documents as a PDF must be submitted by email to MiddleGrades@cde.ca.gov. The digital copies must be submitted as a continuous PDF document.

### Application Review

Each application will be read and scored by a minimum of two reviewers. Application review will occur during April 2025.

### Evaluation Criteria

Each application will be evaluated based on its ability to meet the five desired Program Elements. (See **Desired Program Elements** in this Request for Applications [RFA])

Each application must address the topics identified as outlined in the **Narrative – Instructions** section of this RFA.

### Format Requirements

Applicants must use forms provided in the appendices of this RFA where specified in the **Instructions for Completing Your Application** section of this RFA. The application Narrative should not exceed 10 pages, double-spaced. Type must be a minimum of 12-point Arial font size; pages should have one-inch margins.

### Technical Assistance

Teri Alves, Education Programs Consultant

916-322-0374

MiddleGrades@cde.ca.gov

Sarah Barnett, Staff Services Analyst

916-319-0474

MiddleGrades@cde.ca.gov

### Incomplete and Late Applications

Incomplete applications will not be considered. Late applications will not be accepted.

### Appeals Process

Appeals are limited to the grounds that the CDE failed to correctly apply the standards for reviewing the application as specified in this RFA. Appeals based on a disagreement with the professional judgment of the grant reader will not be considered.

The appellant must file a detailed and complete written appeal, including the issue(s) in dispute, the legal authority or other basis for the appeal position, and the remedy sought. The Letter of Appeal must have a “wet” or certified electronic signature of the authorized agent or the designee. The Letter of Appeal should be emailed with the subject line MSFA Appeal to MiddleGrades@cde.ca.gov.

The CDE must **receive** the letter of appeal, with an original signature of the authorized person who signed the application, no later than 14 calendar days after receipt of the initial emailed result.

## Instructions for Completing your Application

This RFA and the application forms are available on the funding profile for this program posted on the CDE website at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/fg/fo/r17/msfa25c9rfa.asp>.

Applicants should download the application forms and fill in all sections completely.

### Application Components

A complete application consists of the following components:

* Cover Sheet
* Narrative
* Budget and Budget Narrative
* Key Personnel
* Supporting Documents
* Letters of commitment from a partnering high school, school district superintendent, school principal, and business partner(s)

### Cover Sheet – Instructions

A completed Cover Sheet (Appendix B) must appear as the first page of the application.

The authorized agent must sign the Cover Sheet to affirm the applicant is aware of the assurances, certifications, terms, and conditions related to the grant program.

Applicants should print out a completed Cover Sheet; then obtain an original signature of the person who certifies the application is correct and complete, and the application must be dated.

### Narrative – Instructions

Applicants should review the **Desired Program Outcomes** section in this RFA prior to completing the Narrative. There is a 10-page limit to the narrative, double-spaced, using one-inch margins, and a minimum of 12-point Arial font size.

Forms provided as appendices to this RFA should be used where noted. Forms do not count towards the 10-page maximum length. Supporting documentation, such as letters of commitment, do not count towards the 10-page maximum length.

The application must address the following Desired Programs Outcomes: (100 points)

1. **Element 1 (5 points):** Describe how the grantee’s grade five and six teachers will implement the CalCRN Career and College Readiness Lesson Plans into their existing curriculum. Lesson plans can be found on the CalCRN Career and College Readiness Lesson Plans web page at [https://www.californiacareers.info/#?Lesson%20Plans](http://www.californiacareers.info/#?Lesson%20Plans).
2. What schools will be utilizing the CalCRN Career and College Readiness Lessons Plans in grades five and six?
3. How many students will be utilizing the CalCRN Career and College Readiness lessons in grades five and six?
4. **Element 2 (25 points):** State the local high school with the complete, high-quality CTE pathway which the applicant school site will be partnering.
	* + 1. Name the high school CTE instructor(s) partnering with the applicant school site.
			2. Name the industry partner(s) and describe their participation with the MSFA.
5. **Element 3 (30 points):** Describe the three-semester career and self-exploration sequence of courses.
	1. One semester mini-CTE or CTE Wheel or modifications on these themes;
	2. One semester introductory to CTE sector-specific content; and
	3. One semester sector/pathway-specific content and the development of a Career Action Plan.
6. **Element 4 (20 points):** Describe the plan for at least four Leadership Seminars given to districts and site educators. Leadership Seminars should provide information and background on career ready practices for middle grade students. Leadership Seminars will also provide quick start information regarding the implementation of effective and comprehensive strategies at the middle school level to facilitate students to become career ready by the time they leave high school.
	1. How many Leadership Seminars will be conducted?
	2. Provide outlines of the planned Leadership Seminars.
7. **Element 5 (5 points):** Name the industry partner(s) that will facilitate work-based learning modules at the MSFA. Attach letter(s) of support from business partner(s).

### Budget and Budget Narrative – Instructions (10 points):

The Budget (Appendix C) must be signed by the authorized district official who has reviewed the Application Budget form. Expenditure code descriptions and budget narrative examples (Appendix D) are provided to assist applicants.

### Chronic Absenteeism Rate – Instructions (5 points):

What is the rate of the middle school and high school’s chronic absenteeism, as listed on the California School Dashboard web page at <https://www.caschooldashboard.org/>? Is this rate higher than the California average?

### Key Personnel – Instructions

Using the Key Personnel form (Appendix E), provide the name, title, school submitting application, and school contact information of key personnel involved in the project. List the roles and responsibilities, as well as the qualifications and experience of each person.

### Supporting Documents – Instructions

Attach additional documents that support your application. At least four letters should be attached. Supporting documents must include Letters of Commitment from:

1. Middle school principal
2. District superintendent
3. Business partner(s)
4. High school partner’s principal

## Grant Awards

### Grant Award Notification

Grantees will receive a Grant Award Notification (GAN) the official CDE document that awards funds to local projects. Each grantee must sign and return the GAN to the CDE before project work may begin and disbursement of funds can be made.

### Assurances, Certifications, Terms, and Conditions

Assurances, certifications, terms, and conditions are requirements of applicants and grantees as a condition of receiving funds. The signed grant application submitted to the CDE is a commitment to comply with the assurances, certifications, terms, and conditions associated with the grant.

### Assurances and Certifications

Applicants do not need to sign and return the general assurances and certifications with the application. Instead, applicants must download assurances and certifications and keep them on file and available for compliance reviews, complaint investigations, or audits. Applicants that participate in the Consolidated Application should already have a copy of the general assurances and certifications on file and do not need to keep a separate copy. Assurances and certifications are available on the CDE Funding Forms web page at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/fg/fo/fm/ff.asp>.

### Terms and Conditions

The grant award will be processed upon receipt of the signed GAN. The GAN must be signed by the authorized agent and returned to the CDE within 10 working days.

Funds awarded shall be used to **supplement—not supplant—**federal and non-federal funds expended to implement the work described in the application.

All funds must be expended within the dates designated and for not more than the maximum amount indicated on the GAN. Encumbrances may be made at any time after the beginning date of the grant stated on the GAN.

A budget revision is required if expenditures for any budget category exceed 25 percent of the authorized budget category total in the approved budget. The budget revision must be approved by the CDE.

### Reporting Requirements

The Final Project Report and the End of Project Financial Expenditure Report are due February 1, 2027. If all reports are not submitted timely, districts may be invoiced for the grant award.

### Payment Procedure

Funds will be remitted on the following schedule:

* Upon receiving the signed GAN form, 90 percent of the total grant funds will be disbursed.
* The final 10 percent of the total grant funds will be disbursed on or before December 31, 2026.

## Appendix AScoring Rubric Criteria

Application will be scored using the rubric below.

Applications will be rated on a 100-point scale, weighted according to the percentages listed by each of the five topics. Grant selection will be made based on region, and highest total scores. Responses will be assessed on the completeness and the quality in which they address each of the topics, including the questions outlined in **Narrative – Instructions** of this Request for Applications.

Scores will be established based on the following five elements:

**Element 1:** Integrating California Career Resource Network (CalCRN) Career and College Readiness Lesson Plans beginning in grade five and continuing through grade twelve. Students will develop a career ready skills foundation prior to entering middle school. **(5 points)**

**Element 2:** Developing a partnership with the local high school with a complete, high-quality career technical education (CTE) pathway that the local educational agency (LEA) students feed into. The Middle School Foundation Academy will also develop industry partnerships to assist with work-based learning opportunities for students. **(25 points)**

**Element 3:** Developing a three-semester career and self-exploration sequence of courses.

1. One semester mini-CTE or CTE Wheel or modifications on these themes;
2. One semester introductory to CTE sector-specific content; and
3. One semester sector/pathway-specific content and the development of a Career Action Plan. **(30 points)**

**Element 4:** Providing four to eight, one-day Leadership Seminars offered at various times and various locations throughout the state to teams of district and site educators to assist on comprehensive strategies at the middle school for students to become career ready by the time they leave high school. **(20 points)**

**Element 5:** Developing industry partner(s) within the LEA’s region that will assist with providing work-based learning modules to be used at the Middle School Foundation Academies. **(5 points)**

### Budget (10 points)

### Chronic Absenteeism Rate (5 points)

## Appendix BCover Sheet

Career Focus of Proposed Academy: Sector and Pathway of Proposed Academy

School Submitting Application: School Submitting Application

Applicant School Address: School Address of Submitting School

School Mailing Address and Phone Number: Submitting School Mailing Address and Phone Number

Submitting School Site Contact Person and Email: Submitting School Contact Person and Email

District Name and County: District Name and County of Submitting School

Name of Superintendent: Name of Superintendent of Submitting School

District Address: District Address of Submitting School

District Contact Person, Telephone Number, and Email Address: District Contact Person, Telephone Number, and Email Address

As the duly authorized representative of the applicant, I have read all assurances, certifications, terms, and conditions associated with the Middle School Foundation Academies Planning Grant, and I agree to comply with all requirements as a condition of funding.

I certify that all applicable state and federal rules and regulations will be observed and that to the best of my knowledge, the information contained in this application is correct and complete.

Superintendent’s Signature: Superintendent’s Signature

## Appendix CBudget

Each applicant must submit this Budget Page along with a Budget Narrative that explains all expenditures under each category. Matching of funds (cash or in-kind) are required for this application.

Applicant District and Middle School Name: District and Middle School Name

Applicant County-District-School (CDS) Code: CDS Code

Applicant’s Principal: Principal Name, Last Name, First Name

Applicant’s Fiscal Contact: District Fiscal Contact, Last Name, First Name

Certificated Salaries Expenditure Code 1000:

 Dollar amount for expenditure code 1000 Certificated Salaries Grant Funds, and narrative explaining use

 Dollar amount for expenditure code 1000 Certificated Salaries District Match Funds, and narrative explaining use

Expenditure code 1000 Certificated Salaries Budget Total Funds amount

Employee Benefit Expenditure Code 3000:

Dollar amount for expenditure code 3000 Employee Benefit Grant Funds

Dollar amount for expenditure code 3000 Employee Benefit District Match Funds

Expenditure code 3000 Employee Benefit Budget Total Funds amount

Books and Supplies Expenditure Code 4000:

 Dollar amount for expenditure code 4000 Books and Supplies Grant Funds, and narrative explaining use

 Dollar amount for expenditure code 4000 Books and Supplies District Match Funds, and narrative explaining use

 Expenditure Code 4000 Books and Supplies Budget Total Funds amount

## Budget (Continued)

Services other than Travel Expenditure Code 5000:

Dollar amount for expenditure code 5000 Services other than Travel Grant Funds, and narrative explaining use

Dollar amount for expenditure code 5000 Services other than Travel District Match Funds, and narrative explaining use

Expenditure Code 5000 Services other than Travel Budget Total Funds amount

Travel and Conferences Expenditure Code 5200:

Dollar amount for expenditure code 5200 Travel and Conferences Grant Funds, and narrative explaining use

Dollar amount for expenditure code 5200 Travel and Conferences District Match Funds, and narrative explaining use

Expenditure Code 5200 Travel and Conferences Budget Total Funds amount

Expenditure Code 6000 Capital Outlay:

Dollar amount for expenditure code 6000 Capital Outlay Grant Funds, and narrative explaining use

Dollar amount for expenditure code 6000 Capital Outlay District Match Funds, and narrative explaining use

Expenditure Code 6000 Capital Outlay Budget Total Funds amount

Indirect Expenditure Code 7000:

Expenditure Code 7000 Indirect (California Department of Education [CDE] approved rates apply) Grant Funds

Expenditure Code 7000 Indirect (CDE approved rates apply) District Match Funds

Expenditure Code 7000 Indirect (CDE approved rates apply) Budget Total Funds amount

Principal’s Signature: Principal’s Signature

Superintendent’s Signature: Superintendent’s Signature

## Appendix DExpenditure Code Descriptions and Budget Narrative Examples

Each object code is described below followed by an example of a budget expenditure narrative. The descriptions and line items may or may not apply to your specific project; they are simply examples.

| **Object Code** | **Description** | **Narrative Example** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **1000** | **Certificated Salaries:**Certificated salaries are salaries that require a credential issued by the Commission on Teacher Credentialing. List all certificated project employees, including percentage or fraction of full time equivalent and rate of pay per day, month, and/or annual salary. Note: Funds in this category are not intended to supplant current fixed costs. | **Certificated Salaries:****$6,000** = Planning time for team to meet and develop the major components of the academy, i.e., develop curriculum; coordinate business/community partners; recruitment process for students; other activities and events. 200 hours X $30 hr. = **$6,000** |

| **Object Code** | **Description** | **Narrative Example** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **3000** | **Certificated Benefits:**Record employer’s contributions to retirement plans and health and welfare benefits. List and include the percentage and dollar amount for each employee benefit being claimed.  | **Certificated Benefits:** Certificated time at 25 percent = **$1,500** |
| **4000** | **Books and Supplies:**Record expenditures for books, supplies, and other non-capitalized property/equipment (movable personal property of a relatively permanent nature that has an estimated useful life greater than one year and an acquisition cost less than the local educational agencies [LEAs] capitalization threshold but greater than the LEA’s inventory threshold). This category includes expenditures for books and supplies (e.g., textbooks, other books, instructional materials). This category also includes supplies used in support services and auxiliary programs, publications, and subscriptions necessary to operate a project office. A listing of all equipment, including the serial and model numbers, purchased with any portion of these grant funds, must be recorded and maintained in the file. | **Books and Supplies:****$3,500** = Grade seven or eight supplemental workbooks directly related to Industry Sector Standards. **$1,500** = Supplies needed for career area. Industry Sector Specific software = **$2,000** |
| **5000** | **Services and Other Operating Expenditures:**Record expenditures for services, rents, leases, maintenance contracts, dues, travel, insurance, utilities, legal, and other operating expenditures.**Travel and Conference:** Include expenditures incurred by and/or for employees and other representatives of the LEA for travel and conferences, including lodging, mileage, parking, bridge tolls, shuttles, taxis, and conference registration expenses necessary to meet the objectives of the program. Receipts are required to be kept on file by your agency for audit purposes. Bus transportation for students should be listed here.**Contracting Services:** Services provided to the school by outside contractors appear under this category. Identify what, when, and where services will be provided. Appropriate activities include conducting workshops, training, and technical assistance activities. | **Services and Other Operating Expenditures:**$4,000 = Academy team to attend Annual Conference, in Sacramento, California.$4,000 = Academy team to attend Convening, in Sacramento, California.**$1,309.52** *=*Career Area or Professional Development |
| **6000** | **Capital Outlay:**Record expenditures for sites, buildings, and equipment, including leases with the option to purchase that meet the LEA’s threshold for capitalization. (Equipment is movable personal property that has both an estimated useful life over one year and an acquisition cost that meets the LEA’s threshold for capitalization. Refer to the district’s threshold amount for capitalization, anything less than this amount should be posted in Object Code 4000). A listing of all equipment, including the serial and model numbers, purchased with any portion of these grant funds, must be recorded and maintained in the file. This category also covers sites, improvement of sites, buildings, and improvement of buildings. | **Capital Outlay:**(Indirect is not charged on object code 6000) |
| **7000** | **Indirect:** if applicable (not to exceed the California Department of Education’s [CDE’s] approved rate). Indirect costs are not assessed on expenditures for capital outlay. CDE approved indirect cost rates can be found on the CDE’s Indirect Cost Rates web page at [https://www.cde.ca.gov/fg/ac/ic/](http://www.cde.ca.gov/fg/ac/ic/). | **Indirect:** check with district for approved rate of 3 percent= **$1,190.48** |

## Appendix EKey Personnel

Key Personnel: Last Name, First Name

Title of Key Personnel: Title of Key Personnel Above

Applicant School: School Submitting Application

School Mailing Address: School Mailing Address

Applicant School Telephone Number, Email, and Fax: School Telephone/ Email/Fax

Qualifications of Key Personnel: Qualifications and Experience of the Key Personnel Named for this Grant

Superintendent Email: Email of Superintendent of Submitting School

Posted By: California Department of Education – January 2025