Exploration Supports: Language Learner Partnership

Introduction

The Multilingual Learner (ML) population continues to increase across Colorado and the opportunities as well as challenges emerge for districts and schools to engage in a continuous improvement process to establish and/or improve upon their Language Instruction Educational Programs (LIEPs). To that end, CDE offers targeted services for districts and schools to improve upon English language development instruction and access to grade level content through:

1. CDE-led diagnostic review process focused on identifying strengths and areas for improvement in systems, supports, and opportunities for ML students;
2. Follow up collaborative action planning and supports;
3. Quarterly progress monitoring, support, and short-cycle action planning; and
4. Some funding for participation and implementation.

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The Language Learner partnership will be facilitated by, and in collaboration with, the CDE's Office of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Education (CLDE) and District Improvement Strategy Office (DISO).

Through the Language Learner Partnership, the district/school will:

- Review implementation of current programming and determine clear strengths, areas of growth, and likely root causes
- Establish a common understanding among partners of the current programmatic and data context of the district in terms of providing language instruction educational programs for MLs
- Leverage and build upon current district data analysis practices to reveal strengths and areas of growth in terms of outcomes for MLs
- Create or refine district vision for serving MLs
- Determine high-leverage and feasible adjustments to program(s), instruction, and/or supplemental services for the current school year and plan for the following school year
- Develop a district/school implementation tool to monitor and track progress toward meeting ML programmatic implementation activities within the district system.

Eligibility & Prioritization

Eligibility. Schools that meet the following criteria are eligible to apply:

- Schools identified for improvement under ESSA as Comprehensive Support (CS), Targeted Support (TS), or Additional Targeted Support (ATS); and/or
- Schools with a state identification School Performance Framework plan type of Priority Improvement, Turnaround, or On Watch

District-level eligibility is based on one or more schools meeting the eligibility criteria above.

Prioritization. If not all EASI proposals can be funded, proposals that meet grant expectations will be funded in the order of the EASI school-level prioritization list. Schools with the highest number of prioritization points will be funded first. District level support requests will use the average prioritization of all EASI eligible schools. District level supports that serve specific EASI-eligible schools will use the average prioritization of the included EASI eligible schools. Details on how prioritization points are calculated and the points for each EASI eligible school are available on the EASI Resources and Technical Assistance webpage.

Program Considerations & Fit

Program Considerations. Success in the Language Learner Partnership is a result of local leadership teams partnering with CDE staff to review their English Language Development (ELD) program successes and areas for potential growth. The process provides time to plan, set goals, observe instruction, and strategically allocate funds to provide extended learning opportunities for educators with a focus on the instructional needs of multilingual learners.

Program Fit. This grant opportunity is a good fit for schools or districts with identified multilingual learners who are academically low performing and struggling to make language progress with their English language acquisition. This is an excellent support route for districts working to embed high quality language instruction for all students.

Sequence of Program Support

The sequence of the work is determined in partnership with CDE through the Language Learner Partnership. The sequence of the work will include four components including diagnostic review, improvement planning, stakeholder engagement, and early implementation as illustrated in the diagram below.



Available Funds & Duration

Available Funds. School-level applicants may request up to the maximum award amount for a school. Awards may be up to $42,000. The recommended fund allocation is $10,000 for the diagnostic review, $10,000 for stakeholder engagement, $2,000 for improvement planning, and $20,000 for early implementation.

District-level applicants may request up to the maximum award amount for a district. Awards may be up to $55,000. The recommended fund allocation is $10,000 for the diagnostic review, $10,000 for stakeholder engagement, $15,000 for improvement planning, and $20,000 for early implementation.

Duration. Program support is designed to support schools or LEAs for a period of 18 months (2026-27 to 2027-28).

Allowable Use of Funds

Funds are intended to support the four components of Exploration Supports. Expenses related to stakeholder engagement, improvement planning, and early implementation must align to the recommendations from the diagnostic review. Allowable use of funds includes costs associated with:

- Stakeholder engagement (stipends, translation, childcare, etc.)
- Development of an improvement plan (or strategic plan, at the district level)
- Early implementation of the plan activities (e.g., leadership or teacher development, stipends to support job-embedded training, or teacher collaboration, etc.).
- Other expenses to support process (e.g., stipends, substitutes, etc.)

Budget Recommendations. For the application submission, the budget should include each of the components of Exploration Supports- review, stakeholder engagement, improvement planning, and early implementation. General placeholders in the budget are acceptable for stakeholder engagement, improvement planning, and early implementation as specific activities will be determined by the outcome of the diagnostic review.

For example, the draft budget for school-level Language Learner Partnership may include the following budget lines:

- Year 1 (2026-27)- Specific expenses outlined to support diagnostic review visits up to $10,000. Any remaining amount should be requested in the placeholders for other components of Exploration Supports.
- Year 1 (2026-27) Placeholder for stakeholder engagement activities as part of diagnostic review and improvement planning for $10,000.
- Year 1 (2026-27)- Placeholder for improvement planning activities as determined by the outcome of the diagnostic review for $2,000.
- Year 1 (2026-27)- Placeholder for early implementation activities as determined by the outcome of the diagnostic review for $20,000.

Note: If entering indirect costs, the total request amount may not exceed the maximum allowable amount.

Applicants should request the maximum award amount in the Year 1 (2026-27) budget. If awarded Exploration Supports, funds are issued in Year 1 (2026-27) and may carryover into Year 2 (2027-28).

Indirect Costs. Applicants may elect to include indirect costs in the application budget. Indirect cost rates based on the district's restricted indirect cost rate. The total request amount (indirect costs plus other budget lines) may not exceed the maximum allowable amount. There are some exclusions for distorting items that apply, such as the limitation of indirects on the first $50,000 on provider contracted services. Grantees should note that indirect costs are only allowed on federal awards. If the grantee receives a state award, indirect costs must be removed during the post-award revision process. More information regarding indirect cost rates is available on CDE's School Finance webpage at https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdefinance/icrc.

Fund Considerations.

- Funds from this opportunity must be used to **supplement and not supplant** any federal, state, and local funds currently being used to provide activities.
- Post-award revisions must be submitted and approved in the online system prior to incurring expenses. Any expenses incurred prior to approval are the responsibility of the LEA. All post-award revisions must be approved by 06/30.
- For federal awards, funds must be obligated by 09/30 and requested by 11/1 of each respective fiscal year.
- For state awards, funds must be obligated by 06/30 of the final year of the grant cycle.
- A school or district may carry funds forward in alignment with funding source restrictions and with CDE approval. At the end of the grant performance period, any non-requested federal funds are reverted and any unspent state funds must be returned to the state.
- CDE may terminate a grant award upon thirty days' notice if it is deemed by CDE that the applicant is not fulfilling the requirements of the funded program as specified in the approved project application, or if the program is generating less than satisfactory results.
- Multi-year or future award year amounts are contingent on allocations of state and federal funds to CDE in each respective fiscal year.

Important Program Dates

Program Dates	Activity
September- December	Meet with the appropriate school and district teams to discuss interest in applying for EASI support and develop an application. If needed, meet with supporting CDE staff.
December	Application due
January	Award notifications
January- May	• Introduction Meetings: Overview of Partnership, development of onsite and virtual schedule, Q&A • On-Site Diagnostic Review: CDE Review of implementation of current programming, data analysis practices, start collaborating on planning • Planning Meeting: Create or refine district vision for serving MLs and develop a district/school implementation plan
Following School Year	Collaborative quarterly implementation support meetings with CDE to support ongoing implementation from the review.
Ongoing	• Continuous and targeted support and collaboration from CDE Offices of CLDE and District Improvement Strategy Office. Submit any revisions to the original budget for approval.

Evaluation and Reporting

Each grantee of the program must, at a minimum, agree to the following evaluation, reporting, and/or progress monitoring components:

- Description of planning process and the plans for the next year of the grant, including an implementation plan based on CDE recommendations from the diagnostic review at the end of Year 1.
- Implementation plan and, when available, implementation data to demonstrate the extent to which implementation occurred with fidelity at the end of Year 2.
- Any implementation and student outcome data associated with measures as identified in the district's plan and shared during the quarterly support meetings at the end of Year 2.
- Integration of pathways work within the school or LEA's Unified Improvement Plan (UIP)
- Final Expenditure Report (FER) in GAINS each fiscal year by 09/30.

Note: All data collected will protect personally identifiable information (PII) protected and is only reported on an aggregate level for purposes of evaluating the EASI support and/or supporting future program improvements.

Program Assurances

LEA Commitments:

- Designate a school level contact/coordinator for the Language Learner Partnership that will work closely with CDE in all grant implementation requirements.
- Agree to share pertinent school, system, and students' data as appropriate with CDE partners.
- Participate in the initial diagnostic review process and develop subsequent improvement plans for English language development.
- Attend and participate in quarterly performance management meetings with CDE.
- Ensure building leadership possess the qualifications and have committed the time necessary to plan for, manage change within their systems, and meet quarterly with CDE partners to accomplish grant activities to lead to ML student achievement and growth gains and ELD program(s) improvement.
- Demonstrate readiness and capacity to engage in a spring Diagnostic Review by participating in planning meetings with CDE partners, establishing necessary district and school team involvement, and committing to the agreed-upon review timeline
- Ensure that funds are being leveraged with other local, state, and federal funds (e.g., Titles I, II, III, V, and IDEA) and that accountability for cost-effective management is provided.
- Ensure the LEA and staff will not discriminate against anyone regarding race, gender, national origin, color, disability, or age.
- LEA will be required to submit Final Expenditure Reports (FER) the end of each fiscal year.
- LEA understands that unobligated funds state funds will be returned to CDE and unobligated federal funds will be rescinded at the conclusion of the grant cycle.
- Funds will be used to supplement and not supplant any federal, state, and local moneys currently being used to provide services and grant dollars will be administered by the appropriate fiscal agent.
- Funded projects will maintain appropriate fiscal and program records and fiscal audits of this program will be conducted by the grantees as a part of their regular audits.
- If any findings of misuse of these funds are discovered, project funds will be returned to CDE.

Related Resources & Information

Colorado Department of Education's EASI Website

www.cde.state.co.us/fedprograms/easiapplication

Colorado Department of Education's Office of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Education

www.cde.state.co.us/cde_english