Other Services: Facilitated Board Training for School Improvement

Introduction

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School boards play an integral role in ensuring student achievement within a school district. However, local board members may not always feel they have a well-defined role in how to successfully engage and support low-performing schools. Similarly, board members are expected to drive academic change but often do not receive formal training on how to best accomplish this work. Per HB 18-1355, the Colorado Department of Education is expected to offer local board training to support the academic outcomes of local education agencies.

The facilitated board training for school improvement offered service was developed through a partnership between the Colorado Association of School Boards (CASB) and the Colorado Department of Education (CDE). The offered service combines effective governance practices along with best practices associated with school turnaround work including the CDE Four Domains for rapid school improvement framework.

The primary objectives of the program include: 1) increased understanding of effective governance practices and board member roles and responsibilities, 2) increased board member understanding and support of district improvement efforts, and 3) a developed action plan for improving academic outcomes related to identified priority board challenge areas. The theory of action is that participation in the training will lead to improved student academic performance over time as measured by Colorado's educational accountability system.

Eligibility & Prioritization

Eligibility. Local boards of LEAs that have (a) at least one school with a state identified School Performance Framework plan type of Priority Improvement, Turnaround, or On Watch and (b) are interested in strengthening governing practices for stronger school improvement.

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. Program outcomes are predicated on Board engagement, interest, and shared willingness to work to improve student outcomes. All board members and the superintendent must agree to fully participate, which serves as a primary program consideration.

Program Fit. All boards that are interested in improving governance practices and student academic outcomes are encouraged to apply. This includes both elected and appointed boards (i.e. charter boards). Boards that support districts and schools that receive other EASI support may be prioritized for support to better align governance with operational work.

Sequence of Program Support

Phase I- Foundations of Effective Governance (Year 1- March-May 2027). Local Boards of Education and Superintendents participate in training focused on governance. Outcomes include:

- An increased understanding of effective governance practices along with board member roles and responsibilities; and
- Create a more cohesive goal-directed board

Phase II- Foundations of Effective Governance (Year 2- 2027-28). The focus of Phase II is supporting the academic outcomes of students. Program outcomes include:

- Assessment of school board's areas of strength, challenge, and opportunity relative to its oversight of district improvement, school improvement, and turnaround
- Learn from the experience of other school boards by reading and discussing case studies and other materials
- Understand the CDE's Four Domains for Rapid School Improvement and how its frameworks might provider a conceptual structure for district and school improvement processes
- Itemize possible steps the board may take in response to information and understanding acquired through the training
- Develop an action plan for strengthening the school board's effectiveness in:
    - Identifying policies and/or actions related to continuous district improvement, school improvement, and turnaround
    - Overseeing the implementation of these policies and activities

Available Funds & Duration

Available Funds. Applicants are encouraged to apply for the full award amount of $10,000 for use in Year 2 (2027-28) following initial governance training.

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

Allowable Use of Funds

Funds are intended to support the participation and implementation of facilitated board training. Allowable use of funds includes the costs associated with:

- Purchase of materials, books, resources related to strengthening local board of education practices
- External provider to facilitate trainings
- Implementation tools or outcome measurement

- Providing additional time for local board of education, superintendent, cabinet, or other staff leadership positions to collaborate
- Other activities related to strengthening local board of education practices as approved by the CDE program lead. All activities/expenses must be tied to the practice of effective governance and show logical connections that engaging in such spending has the potential to lead to improved student outcomes.

Budget Recommendations. For the application, a draft budget should include how the funds may be used. It is acceptable, however, to use a general placeholder in the budget and determine the budget in partnership with the program lead after the completion of the initial training phase of the program. Any expenses related to an external provider must be supported by a scope of work (draft version acceptable) that clearly outlines timelines, deliverables, and costs for the LEA.

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
March- May 2027	Kick-off event (CDE Staff, CASB, and Facilitator introduction to Local Board)
March- May 2027	Self-assessment of Board Performance
March 2027- May 2028	Multi-phase program participation (multiple meetings)

March- May	Follow-up self-assessment with supplemental technical assistance as needed
Following School Year	Use funding, as outlined in approved budget, for additional board activities

Evaluation and Reporting

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

- Local Board Facilitated Training Assessment Tool results (before and at the conclusion of the participation of the program phase)
- Other evaluation survey results as determined in partnership with CDE
- Local board member participation in a CDE facilitated focus group for approximately 60 minutes. The focus groups will involve discussion of the perceived benefits and limitations of the program along with how state support might be improved with future board of education training opportunities.
- If requested, superintendent agrees to participate in a semi-structured individual interview following program completion to obtain their perspective concerning the impact of the program
- 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:

- The grantee will work with the Colorado Department of Education to provide the requested data within the specified time frames. This will include board participation in the pre and post Local Board Facilitated Training Assessment Tool along with exit surveys for each phase of training
- Agreement that any external facilitator selected by the grantee will participate in the program as designed, this includes monthly participation in facilitator meetings as requested by program staff (during each phase of the program) to improve program outcomes by ensuring fidelity of program implementation. All facilitators must be approved by CDE prior to the award of any agreement for services between the grantee and prospective facilitator.
- 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.

District Leadership Commitments:

- The superintendent agrees to participate (following program completion) in a one-hour interview (if requested) concerning the perceived impact of the program on board members.

- The superintendent agrees to be present, participate, and support the board, as needed, in the Local Board of Education Facilitated Training sessions.

Local Board of Education Member Commitments:

- Participation in the pre and post Local Board Facilitated Training Tool along with exit surveys for each phase of the training.
- Participation in the Local Board of Education Facilitated Training sessions and any subsequent training or grant related activities for the purpose of strengthening local board of education practices.