

External Evaluation Services
21st Century California School Leadership Academy (21CSLA) Initiative – Cohort 3

Questions and Clarifications

October 22, 2026

Below are the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence's ("CCEE") responses to questions and requests for clarification received from prospective Respondents regarding the Request for Proposals for External Evaluation Services for the [21st Century California School Leadership Academy \(21CSLA\) Initiative – Cohort 3](#) (the "RFP"), issued on October 8, 2026. CCEE staff has endeavored to respond as thoroughly as possible and cited relevant language from the RFP where appropriate.

Questions and requests for clarification that are similar or on the same topic have been grouped together for ease of navigation and response. Questions that were submitted are not necessarily provided verbatim as submitted, and may have been edited for clarity, but have not been altered in substance. CCEE will presume that all Respondents have read and understood all of the responses provided herein upon submittal of any Proposal.

Contract Term and Budget

QUESTION 1: Section I (Timelines) states that services run "through fiscal year 2026–27, with the possibility of annual renewal," while Section V describes deliverables through December 30, 2029. Is the initial contract for fiscal year 2026–27 only, with annual renewals through 2029?

***RESPONSE:** Yes. As stated in Section VII.H of the RFP, due to CCEE's July 1 to June 30 fiscal year, any agreement with the selected Respondent will be written on a fiscal-year to fiscal-year basis, with the ability to extend it at the exclusive option of CCEE. The initial agreement is anticipated to cover December 1, 2026, through June 30, 2027. Subsequent annual agreements may extend the work through the anticipated evaluation contract term ending December 30, 2029 (see Section V).*

Renewal is contingent on continued annual federal funding by Congress and California State Budget authority, and on CCEE's evaluation of the Respondent's performance (see Section V, Evaluation Deliverables and Timeline). Proposals should nonetheless include a multi-year work plan and budget covering the full evaluation term, broken out by the budget periods shown in Section VII.H.

QUESTION 2: Is the \$175,000 annual maximum prorated for the first budget period (December 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027), or is the full \$175,000 available for that period?

***RESPONSE:** Section VII.H of the RFP establishes an annual not-to-exceed amount of up to \$175,000 per year. Each annual budget period identified in Section VII.H, including the partial first period (December 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027) and the partial final period (July 1, 2029 – December 30, 2029), may not exceed \$175,000.*

Program Scale

QUESTION 3: How many Regional Academies and approximately how many Cohort 3 participants are expected each year?

***RESPONSE:** Cohort 3 of the 21CSLA initiative is delivered through the 21CSLA State Center and*

7 Regional Academies selected through the Cohort 3 Request for Applications (RFA) process completed in 2026 (see Sections III and IV of the RFP). Participant counts will vary by year and by region based on Regional Academy offerings and Cohort 3 metrics and deliverables. The Center's statewide database will serve as the primary source of participation and attendance data (see Section V, Cross-Cutting Responsibilities). CCEE will work with the selected Respondent to determine appropriate participant groups and sample sizes throughout the project.

Data Access and Existing Materials

QUESTION 4: Will CCEE or the 21CSLA State Center provide the evaluator with participant-level data from the Center's database under a data-sharing agreement? If so, what is the expected timing of first access?

***RESPONSE:** Yes. Section V of the RFP directs the selected Respondent to leverage the Center's statewide database and data-analyst capacity as the primary participation and attendance data source. As a condition of receiving funds, 21CSLA grantees must provide program data and participate in the external evaluation (Ed. Code § 44690; see Section III). CCEE will coordinate with the Center to provide the selected Respondent with access to a list of Cohort 3 participants upon execution of an agreement.*

QUESTION 5: Will CCEE facilitate access to local student and school data for the impact analysis, or is the evaluator expected to obtain it directly from districts?

***RESPONSE:** Section V of the RFP asks the selected Respondent to pursue the logic-model pathway from professional learning to leader practice, school conditions, and student outcomes, including California School Dashboard indicators and local data, where feasible. Dashboard data are publicly available.*

CCEE will work with the selected Respondent, the Center, and Regional Academies to identify local data that are feasible to obtain and appropriate to the approved evaluation design. Any requests to LEAs for local data will be coordinated with CCEE. Respondents should describe their proposed approach to outcome measurement, including the data sources they expect to rely on and how they will address limitations if local data are not available.

QUESTION 6: Does CCEE's existing data infrastructure allow evaluators to track the same participating school leaders, and their respective schools, across multiple years to support longitudinal analyses of changes in leadership practice, school conditions, and student outcomes?

***RESPONSE:** The Center's registration database is the primary source of participant data for Cohort 3 and is the basis for the role-validated participant sample described in Section V of the RFP. The extent to which individual participants can be linked across program years, and to their schools, will depend on the data elements collected and on the terms of any data-sharing agreement. These details will be confirmed with the selected Respondent during the start-up phase.*

Section III of the RFP notes that the evaluation should identify opportunities to strengthen longitudinal data collection and better understand longer-term impact. Respondents are encouraged to describe the longitudinal design they would propose, the data linkages it would

require, and how the design would adapt if those linkages are limited.

QUESTION 7: Which background documents, existing datasets, validated instruments, and baseline measures will be available to the selected evaluator at the beginning of the project? Specifically, will the selected evaluator receive the Cohort 3 RFA, the Center’s Cohort 3 metrics and measures of effectiveness, the eight effective features of 21CSLA professional learning, and prior 21CSLA evaluation reports and instruments? Are any of these available to Respondents now?

RESPONSE: *Prior 21CSLA evaluation reports and annual evaluation plans are publicly available on CCEE’s Statewide Evaluation webpage, <https://ccee-ca.org/statewide-evaluation>.*

In addition to the publicly available materials, upon execution of an agreement, CCEE will share with the selected Respondent the materials needed to begin the evaluation. These include the Cohort 3 RFA, the Center’s Cohort 3 metrics and deliverables, the grant administration measures of effectiveness approved by the state agency team, and prior evaluation instruments and data collection protocols. They also include the Center’s operational coaching instruments referenced in Section V (coaching-log application, pre/post summative tool, validated coaching participant survey, and program-assessment tool). Cohort 3 baseline measures will be established by the selected Respondent through the Baseline Data Report (D1.4).

Evaluation Methodology and Human Subjects

QUESTION 8: Previous 21CSLA evaluations have incorporated mixed-methods approaches, including inferential statistical analyses. Does CCEE anticipate maintaining comparable statistical approaches for Cohort 3, or would alternative methods, such as multiple linear regression, multilevel regression, or longitudinal models, be appropriate to account for variation across Regional Academies and examine change over time?

RESPONSE: *The RFP does not prescribe specific statistical methods. Section V requires a mixed-methods design that combines the participant survey, focus groups with Regional Academy and Center leaders, document review, and Center database analytics, triangulating across sources. Respondents may propose inferential methods, including regression, multilevel, or longitudinal models, where they are appropriate to the evaluation questions and to the data available.*

Proposals should explain how the proposed methods address the five evaluation questions, account for variation across Regional Academies. Methodology will be considered under the “Evaluation Design and Methodology” and “Approach to Measuring Leader, School, and Student Impact” criteria in Section VII.K of the RFP. Evaluation questions and measures will be finalized collaboratively during the start-up phase.

QUESTION 9: Is formal Institutional Review Board (IRB) review expected, and if so, is the evaluator responsible for obtaining it?

RESPONSE: *Section V of the RFP requires the selected Respondent to maintain human-subjects protections and FERPA compliance, and to coordinate educator release forms for surveys, focus groups, interviews, and observations, if applicable. The selected Respondent is responsible for meeting these requirements, including obtaining IRB review where required by the Respondent’s institutional policies or warranted by the proposed design. Respondents should describe their*

approach to human-subjects protections in the proposal.

Reporting Periods

QUESTION 10: With the grant program year (October–September), CCEE’s fiscal year (July–June), and the annual evaluation cycle (January–December), which period should each annual report cover?

***RESPONSE:** Each annual report should cover the Cohort 3 program year (October 1 – September 30) that concluded immediately before the report’s due date. As stated in Appendix A, all deliverable due dates are keyed to the October–September program year, and annual reports are due no later than December 30 following each program year.*

Respondent and Project Lead Qualifications

QUESTION 11: Sections VI.B and VII.E.1 establish minimum qualifications for Respondents and Project Leads. In assessing comparable experience, how does CCEE distinguish formal educational evaluation studies from comprehensive district-level program evaluations, organizational effectiveness assessments, and multiyear accountability and continuous improvement initiatives involving systematic data analysis, policy compliance, performance measurement, and reporting?

***RESPONSE:** Section VI.B of the RFP requires a minimum of five years of recent (within the last seven years) full-time experience conducting evaluation studies within the educational setting. Section VII.E.1 of the RFP requires a Project Lead with at least three years of recent experience managing projects of comparable size, scope, and complexity. CCEE does not limit qualifying experience to a particular type of organization or project title.*

Reviewers will assess whether the experience described demonstrates the design and conduct of evaluation studies, including systematic study design, data collection, quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods analysis, and reporting of findings on program implementation and effectiveness (see Section VII.D). Because the selected Respondent will serve as an independent evaluator and thought partner (Section V), Respondents should also describe the independence of their role in prior work.

Respondents should describe each relevant engagement specifically, including its purpose, evaluation design, methods, duration, and deliverables, and identify how it relates to the work described in this RFP. Experience with mixed-methods evaluations, longitudinal studies, education policy, leadership development, and complex systems or capacity-building initiatives is strongly preferred (Section VI.B).

Proposal Format, Scoring, and Selection

QUESTION 12: Do the cover letter, work plan, and references count toward the 15-page limit? Are there font, spacing, or margin requirements?

***RESPONSE:** As stated in Section VII of the RFP, “Proposals should be no longer than 15 pages, excluding curricula vitae of identified personnel.” All required items listed in Sections VII.A through VII.J, including the cover letter, proposed work plan, and references, count toward the 15-page limit. Personnel résumés and curricula vitae, including those of subcontractor staff, are*

submitted as attachments and do not count (Sections VII.E and VII.E.3).

Several sections also carry their own page maximums: Description of Respondent Organization (1 page), Organizational Capacity and Previous Experience (2 pages), Qualifications of Respondent Personnel including the Organization Chart (2 pages), Costs and Fees (1 page), and References (one-half page). CCEE does not prescribe font, spacing, or margin requirements; proposals should be easily readable and submitted as a single electronically signed PDF (Section IX.B). Proposals may use tables and bullets to communicate main ideas and flow of work.

QUESTION 13: What score scale is applied to each criterion before the multipliers, and will finalists be invited to interview or present?

RESPONSE: *Each criterion in the Submission Review Rubric (Section VII.K) receives a reviewer score on a scale, which is then multiplied by the weight shown.*

The RFP does not provide for interviews or presentations as a formal stage of the selection process. However, CCEE reserves the right to request additional information or conduct discussions with Respondents as needed during the review process, and may begin negotiations with selected Respondents at its discretion (Sections VIII and IX.F–G).

Contract Requirements

QUESTION 14: What insurance coverage and limits are required of the selected contractor?

RESPONSE: *Pursuant to Section IX.G, upon selecting a Respondent, the CCEE/MCOE shall provide an agreement for negotiation by the Parties, and insurance requirements will be specified in that agreement.*