



28 September 2025

Sissi Villamizar
Helios Education Foundation
4747 N 32nd Street Phoenix, Arizona 85018

Dear Ms. Villamizar,

On behalf of Bill Dolezal, the Superintendent of the Cave Creek Unified School District, thank you for the opportunity to submit our proposal. We are grateful for your commitment to projects that uplift schools and strengthen communities.

In Cave Creek Unified School District (CCUSD), nearly one in five students remain “minimally proficient” in English Language Arts and math. For three years, scores have stalled. Behind each number is a child whose future may be limited by a lack of confidence and skills. Yet the impact reaches far beyond the classroom. Consistently low proficiency ripples outward, shaping property values, economic development, community pride, and long-term opportunity. When schools falter, families reconsider moving into the district, employers hesitate to invest, and students themselves risk internalizing low expectations. What appears to be an academic issue is, in truth, a community-wide concern.

CCUSD has tried to solve this before. From differentiated instruction to Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), each initiative sparked short-lived enthusiasm. But because programs were introduced piecemeal—one school here, one department there—the results faded, and growth never took root.

This time, the solution is systemic: a three-year, district-wide PLC coaching partnership with Solution Tree, Inc. Every teacher. Every administrator. One united system, rooted in research and built to last. By embedding standards-based practices and consistent professional collaboration, CCUSD can create a culture where growth is no longer episodic but sustainable.

By year three, we expect at least a 10% increase in “highly proficient” students and an 8% reduction in “minimally proficient.” These shifts mean more than stronger scores—they mean renewed community pride, higher confidence in local schools, and a stronger workforce pipeline for the area. In short, better schools equal a stronger community.

To make this vision real, we respectfully request \$ 516,405.00. Your investment ensures measurable student growth, economic and social stability, and a future where all children can thrive.

On behalf of CCUSD, thank you again for considering our proposal. I would be honored to share more about how, together, we can change the story for our students and our community.

Sincerely,

Chris Hazeltine
ELA Teacher & Writing Instructor (Sonoran Trails Middle School)
Cave Creek Unified School District
480.272.8669
chazeltine@ccusd93.org

ARIZONA COMMON GRANT APPLICATION

Executive Summary

Please use only the space provided for your responses.

Date application submitted:	28 September 2025
Grantmaker this application is submitted to:	Helios Educational Foundation
Total giving to your organization from this grantmaker in the past three years (list purpose, amount and year for all grants):	0.00
Name of applicant organization:	Cave Creek Unified School District (93)
Street address:	33016 N 60th Street
City, state, zip:	Scottsdale, Arizona 85266
Mailing address:	P.O. Box 426
City, state, zip:	Cave Creek, Arizona 85327
Website address:	www.ccusd93.org

Executive director's name:	Bill Dolezal (Superintendent)		
Phone:	480-575-2015	Email:	bdolezal@ccusd93.org
		Fax:	
Contact person's name & title:	Dr. Patty Jensen (Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services)		
Phone:	480-575-2034	Email:	pjensen@ccusd93.org
		Fax:	
Board president's name:	Janet Greer-Busbee		Phone: 480-575-2000
Has board president been made of aware of and approved this request?	☒ Yes ☐ No		
Is the applicant an IRS 501c3 nonprofit?	☐ Yes ☒ No	If yes, year incorporated:	
If no, is your organization a (check if applicable):	☒ Public school ☐ Municipality ☐ Indian tribe		
If your organization is none of the above, check with each grantmaker for details on using fiscal agents, and list name and address of fiscal agent and Employer Identification Number.			

Project name:	Sustainable Success: PLCs in Action		
Type of funding request (check one):	☐ General operating ☐ Endowment ☐ Start-up ☐ Technical assistance ☒ Project/program ☐ Capital ☐ Other (describe):		
Applicant's annual budget:	\$ 32,384,796.00	For which fiscal year?	2024-2025
Total project budget:	\$ 2,393,585.00		
Amount of this proposal request:	\$ 516,405.00		
Time period this funding will cover:	2026-2027 / 2027-2028 / 2028-2029	Date funds are needed:	July 2026
Target population for this proposal and number of people served:	213: 206 Teachers / 5 Principals / 2 District Admin.		
PROPOSAL SUMMARY In 100 words or less, summarize the purpose of this request. What will you do? Where? With whom? When? Why is it important?	Cave Creek Unified School District (CCUSD) requests \$516,405.00 to launch a district-wide, three-year Professional Learning Communities (PLC) initiative with Solution Tree, Inc. Serving 4,800 students in the Cave Creek school system, the project begins in 2026 and involves all teachers, site administrators, and district leaders. Through training, coaching, and structured collaboration, PLCs will strengthen instruction in ELA and Math, reduce "minimally proficient" students, and increase those achieving "highly proficient." This initiative is vital to ensure equity, attract and retain families, and create a sustainable culture of teacher leadership and measurable academic growth beyond the grant period.		

II. Organizational Background

Cave Creek Unified School District (CCUSD) began in 1886 in a one-room schoolhouse. A 1984 unification created today's district — a high-performing system with strong community roots and a pioneering spirit.

CCUSD's mission is to provide innovative, high-quality learning for all students. The 2022 Strategic Plan identifies five priorities: Student Success, Employee Excellence, Safe Environments, Effective Operations, and Strong Community Partnerships. Nearly 4,800 students in Cave Creek, Carefree, northern Scottsdale, and parts of Phoenix benefit from opportunities ranging from pre-kindergarten and International Baccalaureate to fine arts, athletics, online learning, and alternative education. A 93% graduation rate and top rankings reflect excellence beyond the classroom.

Governance and collaboration sustain this culture. The Governing Board aligns decisions with student needs; teachers and staff deliver instruction and support; and Exceptional Student Services ensures inclusive pathways. Partners such as the Cave Creek Unified Education Foundation and Kiwanis — which has raised more than \$300,000 — expand resources and enrich learning.

Building on this foundation, CCUSD will launch a three-year Professional Learning Communities (PLC) initiative with Solution Tree, Inc. All teachers, five site administrators, and two district leaders will participate, embedding research-based practices across campuses. The Governing Board will oversee alignment; district leaders will coordinate; site administrators will monitor fidelity; and teachers will lead daily PLC work. Volunteers and partners will strengthen the mission through advocacy and resources.

III. Purpose of Request

CCUSD's greatest challenge is stalled growth in ELA and Math. For three consecutive years, nearly 20% of students have remained "minimally proficient," with few advancing into "highly proficient." This gap undermines equity, enrollment, and confidence in district performance while risking loss of performance-based funding. Past initiatives such as Six Traits Writing, differentiated instruction, and isolated PLC training created momentum but quickly faded, leaving "initiative fatigue." CCUSD now requires a unified, district-wide professional learning system to ensure sustained, equitable growth.

Fiscal pressures heighten this urgency. With ESSER funds exhausted, no voter-approved override since 2007, enrollment declines forcing two elementary school closures, and 27% of families using Empowerment Scholarship Accounts, the district begins this year with a \$2.55 million deficit. To demonstrate commitment, the Governing Board approved \$280,500 in General Fund carryover—contingent on grant approval—to launch PLCs. This conditional allocation signals readiness to leverage external support, laying the foundation for a sustainable system that strengthens instruction, attracts families, and ensures long-term success.

The solution is a three-year partnership with Solution Tree, Inc. to embed PLCs district-wide:

- **Year One (2026–2027):** Teachers and administrators establish PLC structures through summer training, in-service, and PD days. Weekly meetings begin with standardized agendas.
- **Year Two (2027–2028):** Teams implement structured data cycles, align instruction with standards-based grading, and refine interventions. Coaching ensures accountability; benchmark data shows early gains.
- **Year Three (2028–2029):** Teacher-leaders assume facilitation roles, assessment design is embedded, and families participate in forums showcasing progress.

Teachers will drive daily PLC work; site administrators will oversee fidelity and coaching; district leaders will coordinate across schools; and Solution Tree will deliver training and on-site support. Community partners will reinforce the work by funding teacher development and engaging families. Grounded in research by Richard DuFour and John Hattie, this plan emphasizes consistency, collaboration, and measurable outcomes. By Year Three, CCUSD will show significant growth and cultivate teacher-leaders to sustain it.

IV. Community Context

Arizona's open-enrollment and Empowerment Scholarship Accounts create strong competition, often leaving districts as "academic islands." CCUSD has tried various professional development models, but past efforts lacked consistency.

This request builds on those experiences by engaging all staff at once, eliminating silos, and embedding practices across grade levels. Sustainability is central: teacher-leaders will facilitate PLCs after coaching ends, and PLC time will be built into calendars.

Though competition limits collaboration, CCUSD participates in statewide networks that provide comparative data and accountability. This initiative complements those connections by creating an internal learning system tied directly to CCUSD's students. Partners strengthen implementation: Solution Tree provides coaching; the Education Foundation amplifies recognition; and local employers will join Year Three forums to link student growth to workforce readiness.

Parents remain central in an open-enrollment system. CCUSD will share progress through newsletters, forums, and "Learning Progress Reports." Parents and students will refine practices through advisory groups and panels, ensuring the initiative reflects family priorities as well as educator expertise.

V. Evaluation Plan

Criteria for Success

- **Year One (Foundations):** All teachers and administrators adopt PLC norms; weekly meetings documented; at least one common formative assessment per unit in ELA and Math.
- **Year Two (Fidelity/Intervention):** 90% of PLCs use data protocols; 60%+ of

“minimally proficient” students move to “partially proficient”; interventions embedded in timetables.

- **Year Three (Outcomes/Sustainability):** +10 percentage points “highly proficient” and –8 points “minimally proficient” on AASA; teacher-leaders facilitate 75%+ of PLCs; standards-based assessments universally applied.
- **And Beyond:** CCUSD earns and maintains DuFour & Eaker Model PLC recognition.

Measurement Tools: PLC artifacts, administrator monitoring, benchmark assessments, and AASA results.

Evaluation Roles: Teachers document shifts; site administrators monitor fidelity; district leaders analyze and report; Solution Tree provides formative feedback.

Use of Results: Findings guide instructional adjustments, PD, and resource allocation. Results are shared with funders, families, and partners to ensure accountability.

This evaluation approach ensures short-term changes build toward long-term outcomes. Year One establishes norms; Year Two matures into systematic interventions; Year Three produces measurable gains and sustainability through teacher-leaders. And Beyond, CCUSD will solidify a culture of PLC leadership and process commitment.

VI. Sustainability

By Year Three, teacher-leaders will facilitate PLCs independently, reducing reliance on external coaches. PLC routines will be embedded into onboarding, PD days, and site expectations.

Sustainability is reinforced by policy and resources: practices in evaluation rubrics and improvement plans; budgets reserving funds for stipends; and community partners celebrating progress.

To secure resources, CCUSD will reallocate PD funds and Title II dollars for PLC training and stipends. The Education Foundation and PTOs will direct donations toward teacher leadership, while businesses may sponsor recognition events. These commitments ensure both financial and community support beyond the grant period.

By the grant’s end, CCUSD will have built a durable culture of collaboration and consistency. Families will see growth, teachers will thrive in a supportive system, and the community will recognize CCUSD as a district that turns commitment into measurable results.

VII. Additional Resources

To complete this project, the district will seek additional contributions to cover remaining costs. The Education Foundation has already funded \$14,201 for teacher handbooks (*Learning by Doing*) and journals, while the Kiwanis Foundation granted \$3,600 for food and stipends to involve CTE culinary classes. In-kind support adds 250 student volunteer hours, valued at \$8,697.50. These students also earn double points toward the Superintendent’s Challenge for Community Service, reflecting strong community engagement.

Project Budget (the budget needed to complete this project)

Funding Year 2026-2027

PROJECTED SOURCES OF SUPPORT

Source	Amount
Government Contracts and Grants	\$ 331,170.00
Foundations	\$ 14,201.00 (CCUEF) \$ 1,200.00 (Kiwanis)
Corporations	\$ 0.00
United Way or other Federated Campaigns	\$ 0.00
Individual Contributions	\$ 0.00
Fundraising Events	\$ 0.00
Membership Income	\$ 0.00
Investment Income	\$ 0.00
Endowed Income	\$ 0.00
Earned Income	\$ 0.00
Other (Specify): Fiscal Year Roll Over	\$ 187,000.00
Volunteers	\$ 5,219.00
Total Income	\$ 538,790.00

PROJECTED EXPENSES

Item	Amount
Salaries and Wages	\$ 575,471.00
EREs (Employee Related Expenses @ 38%)	\$ 218,679.00
Consultants and Professional Fees	\$ 328,500.00
Subcontractors	\$ 0.00
Employee Education and Training	\$ 2,872.00
Travel/Transportation	\$ 2,670.00
Equipment	\$ 1,800.00
Supplies	\$ 2,000.00
Printing and Copying	\$ 1,000.00
Telephone and Fax (Internet & WiFi)	\$ 1,500.00
Postage and Delivery	\$ 0.00
Rent and Utilities	\$ 21,000.00
Insurance	\$ 0.00
Depreciation	\$ 0.00
In-Kind: Volunteers	\$ 5,219.00
Other (Specify):	\$ 0.00
Total Expense	\$ 1,160,711.00
Difference (Income less Expense)	\$ 621,921.00

I certify that the above information is true to the best of my knowledge.

Name Chris Hazeltine

Title Grant Writer

Date 21 September 2025

Budget Narrative

The Cave Creek Unified School District is launching a districtwide initiative to embed professional learning community (PLC) practices across all schools, supported by internal leadership, external expertise, and community engagement. Key leaders—including the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, Assistant to the Superintendent, Director of Data and Assessment, and all five school principals—will devote substantial portions of their professional year to guiding this work, with salaries and employee-related benefits reflecting the true cost of personnel investment. Nationally recognized Solution Tree, Inc. consultants will provide intensive coaching during summer administrator training and districtwide professional development days, directly reaching over 200 educators and equipping them with collaborative strategies that impact classroom practice. Additional costs include new teacher training, utilities, maintenance of facilities, and essential supplies, printing, and connectivity, while student volunteers will contribute significant in-kind service hours to further community support. Although existing foundation support and rollover funds offset some expenses, the district seeks \$331,170.00 in new grant funding to cover the full scope of the project, ensuring the sustainable, system-wide adoption of PLCs that will continue to strengthen teaching and learning well beyond the grant period.

Project Budget (the budget needed to complete this project)

Funding Year 2027-2028

PROJECTED SOURCES OF SUPPORT

Source	Amount
Government Contracts and Grants	\$ 177,844.00
Foundations	\$ 1,200.00 (Kiwanis)
Corporations	\$ 0.00
United Way or other Federated Campaigns	\$ 0.00
Individual Contributions	\$ 0.00
Fundraising Events	\$ 0.00
Membership Income	\$ 0.00
Investment Income	\$ 0.00
Endowed Income	\$ 0.00
Earned Income	\$ 0.00
Other (Specify): Fiscal Year Roll Over	\$ 93,500.00
Volunteers	\$ 1,740.00
Total Income	\$ 274,284.00

PROJECTED EXPENSES

Item	Amount
Salaries and Wages	\$ 559,539.00
EREs (Employee Related Expenses @ 38%)	\$ 212,625.00
Consultants and Professional Fees	\$ 176,954.00
Subcontractors	\$ 0.00
Employee Education and Training	\$ 0.00
Travel/Transportation	\$ 890.00
Equipment	\$ 1,800.00
Supplies	\$ 2,000.00
Printing and Copying	\$ 1,000.00
Telephone and Fax (Internet & WiFi)	\$ 1,500.00
Postage and Delivery	\$ 0.00
Rent and Utilities	\$ 7,000.00
Insurance	\$ 0.00
Depreciation	\$ 0.00
In-Kind: Volunteers	\$ 1,740.00
Other (Specify):	\$ 0.00
Total Expense	\$ 965,048.00
Difference (Income less Expense)	\$ 690,764.00

I certify that the above information is true to the best of my knowledge.

Name Chris Hazeltine

Title Grant Writer

Date 21 September 2025

Budget Narrative

The Cave Creek Unified School District is committed to embedding professional learning community (PLC) practices that strengthen collaboration, shared accountability, and student achievement, requiring both leadership and teacher investment supported by nationally recognized expertise. Salaries and employee-related expenses reflect the significant time commitments of the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, support staff, Director of Data and Assessment, and all five school principals, ensuring accurate accounting of personnel costs. Central to the initiative is a one-day districtwide professional development event led by Solution Tree, Inc. coaches, where over 200 educators will continue to gain the knowledge and reinforce collaborative structures needed for successful PLC adoption. Supporting costs include travel, supplies, technology, and utilities to ensure effective implementation, while rollover funds, foundation support, and volunteer contributions provide valuable offsets and in-kind resources. To meet the full scope of this effort, however, the district seeks \$177,844.00 in grant funding, an investment that will build a sustainable system of collaborative professional learning designed to strengthen instruction and improve student outcomes long after the grant period concludes.

Project Budget (the budget needed to complete this project)

Funding Year 2028-2029

PROJECTED SOURCES OF SUPPORT

Source	Amount
Government Contracts and Grants	\$ 7,390.00
Foundations	\$ 1,200.00 (Kiwanis)
Corporations	\$ 0.00
United Way or other Federated Campaigns	\$ 0.00
Individual Contributions	\$ 0.00
Fundraising Events	\$ 0.00
Membership Income	\$ 0.00
Investment Income	\$ 0.00
Endowed Income	\$ 0.00
Earned Income	\$ 0.00
Other (Specify): Volunteers	\$ 1,740.00
Total Income	\$ 10,330.00

PROJECTED EXPENSES

Item	Amount
Salaries and Wages	\$ 572,019.00
EREs (Employee Related Expenses @ 38%)	\$ 217,367.00
Consultants and Professional Fees	\$ 6,500.00
Subcontractors	\$ 0.00
Employee Education and Training	\$ 0.00
Travel/Transportation	\$ 890.00
Equipment	\$ 1,800.00
Supplies	\$ 500.00
Printing and Copying	\$ 300.00
Telephone and Fax (Internet & WiFi)	\$ 1,500.00
Postage and Delivery	\$ 0.00
Rent and Utilities	\$ 4,000.00
Insurance	\$ 0.00
Depreciation	\$ 0.00
In-Kind: Volunteers	\$ 1,740.00
Other (Specify):	\$ 0.00
Total Expense	\$ 806,616.00
Difference (Income less Expense)	\$ 796,286.00

I certify that the above information is true to the best of my knowledge.

Name Chris Hazeltine

Title Grant Writer

Date 21 September 2025

Budget Narrative

The Cave Creek Unified School District is committed to embedding Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) across all schools to foster collaboration, improve instructional practices, and elevate student achievement. This initiative requires significant investment from district leadership and building-level principals, who will devote 20–100% of their professional time to implementation, with salaries and employee-related benefits reflecting this commitment. To ensure successful adoption, the district will partner with Solution Tree, Inc. for a final one-day administrative professional development session that will solidify PLC foundations, establish consistent collaborative leadership, and scaffold the transition to long-term sustainability. Travel and per diem costs will support delivery by nationally recognized consultants, while operational needs—including supplies, printing, technology, and district training facilities—are essential for high-quality implementation. In-kind contributions from student volunteers further demonstrate community support; however, given the scope of this work, the district seeks a final \$7,390.00 in grant funding to fully realize the project and ensure that PLC practices become a sustainable system for strengthening teaching and learning districtwide.