



THE RAPIDES FOUNDATION

District Grant for Effective Schools Request for Updated Proposals School Year 2025-2026

**Online proposal submission deadline:
Friday, April 11, 2025; no later than 4:00 p.m. CT**

1. Mission of The Rapides Foundation

The mission of The Rapides Foundation is to improve the health status of Central Louisiana. In support of this mission, the Foundation seeks to increase the level of educational attainment and achievement as the primary path to improved economic, social and health status.

A report titled *Exploring the Social Determinants of Health* by The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation states:

“Everyone knows that without a good education, prospects for a good job with good earnings are slim. Few people think of education as a crucial path to health. However, a large body of evidence strongly—and, with very rare exceptions, consistently – links education with health, even when other factors like income are taken into account.”

For example, the average level of education in the U.S. population has increased steadily over the past several decades – an important achievement given that more years of education usually translates into more years of life. However, in Central Louisiana only 30% of adults twenty-five and older have completed a postsecondary degree compared to 38% in the United States. For women, the amount of education achieved is a key determinant of the welfare and survival of their children. Higher levels of education also increase the likelihood of obtaining or understanding health-related information needed to develop health-promoting behaviors and beliefs in prevention. But again, educational attainment differs by race, socio-economic levels and ethnicity. According to a 2012 report of the National Center for Health Statistics, the life expectancy at age 25 is about a decade shorter for people who do not have a high school degree compared with those who have completed college. The Louisiana infant mortality rate is almost double for infants of mothers with less than 12 years of education compared with those with an educational level of 13 or more years.

Education is essential to the overall health and well-being of Central Louisiana.

2. Partnership

For this grant application process, The Rapides Foundation plans to continue its successful practice of partnering with public school districts, thereby serving approximately 90 percent of all K-12 students in the Central Louisiana region. Working at the system level ensures students and teachers at district-led schools are involved in a well-coordinated, highly-targeted effort. By utilizing already existing administrative and communication structures, there will be a seamless and immediate continuance of our professional development work. This large-scale improvement is necessary in order to impact regional attainment and eventually lead to improved health status throughout the region.

3. Grant Opportunity

The nine public school districts in The Rapides Foundation service area are invited to apply for grants to support district-wide school improvement plans aimed at increasing educational attainment and improving student achievement. The Foundation will entertain all concepts, with respect to student performance as impacted by professional and leadership development, which reflect a defensible need within the district and demonstrate a high level of rigor and planning.

Grant funds may support district plans that address professional development for teachers and/or strengthen leadership capacity within the district. Districts should determine areas of greatest need for teacher and leadership development and then address them in a defensible way that continues to deepen their previous work in these areas. Districts may initiate new professional development or leadership strategies in core areas as long as those strategies follow a comprehensive data analysis.

Maximum district funding amounts are based on district characteristics and student population. Funding amounts are provided to the districts individually.

4. Basis for continued and heightened relationship with Districts

The Rapides Foundation has decided to continue to offer district level flexibility in the upcoming Effective Schools Grant application process. This decision was made for the following reasons:

1. Our previous work together has been productive, collaborative and successful.
2. The role of professional development in improving student achievement is now well established and accepted throughout the region.
3. An analysis of district data suggests that differing needs and levels of implementation now exist around the region. Therefore, while some “non-negotiables” will still exist, other decisions can and should be made at the district level.

The Rapides Foundation desires to continue and heighten its relationship with school districts.

Education funding represents 40 percent of all the Foundation’s available resources. The Rapides Foundation considers these high-value dollars – that could have been spent in other areas – but have been dedicated to capacity building for teachers and other instructional leaders. The research is clear that, among school-related factors, professional development in these areas represents the best chance for improved student achievement and growth in educational attainment. The rationale for The Rapides Foundation’s commitment to the districts is clear: Better teaching leads to better health status for Central Louisiana. Dedicated effort on the part of districts is essential, and therefore, required, to make these efforts a complete success.

What are the “non-negotiables”?

- Funds will still be provided to districts rather than individual schools.
- Funds must be targeted at professional development and include classroom coaching related components.
- A leadership component is still required.
- District participation in professional development / leadership development training administered by The Orchard Foundation is expected. This includes Superintendent Network, District Leadership Network, Aspiring Leaders, Leading for Better Instruction and other professional development opportunities.
- Sustainability plans must be included for each initiative within the grant.

What are the expectations?

Districts will update, enhance or change their current 2024-2025 Effective Schools Work Plan to meet the needs of their district. This is an opportunity to make changes to activities, plans, vendors, budgets, etc. The grant proposal should include the parish plan for how grant dollars will be used and why. This plan must continue to be based on an analysis of existing data, reflect exigent student achievement/educational attainment needs within the district and align to the districts strategic plan. Further, decisions about the use of the dollars should be made using a shared decision-making process that includes teachers, building-level and central administrators. Decisions should also be based on the district’s capacity to support and reinforce the professional development (Include Classroom coaching/ feedback) at the school level.

Any decision to change course from the 2024-2025 grant priorities must include a sound rationale.

For example ---

- There may be a new funding source identified that will allow the Effective Schools Grant to be utilized in new ways.
- Current data may show that a previous need has now been met.
- The existence of newly trained district facilitators may result in the need for fewer outside experts, making funds available.
- New data may suggest an exigent need in a particular area that supersedes a current practice.

In any case, when successful initiatives within the Effective Schools Grant are changed or

eliminated, an explanation of how they will be sustained within the district is now required.

The plan must include:

- A data analysis of needs
- Goals and a rationale for their selection as related to the data and the district's overall strategic plan.
- Implementation plans, including time tables, participants, facilitators and names of the staff members who will be accountable for each initiative
- Outcome measures that speak to how the district will know that progress is being made.
- Sustainability strategies, (including classroom coaching and feedback) Sustainability refers to the ongoing development of internal staff and structure designed to ensure the continuance of an initiative when change occurs.
- Communication plans are required to exchange information and ideas with schools, school boards, and the broader community.
- Districts can utilize any forms provided by the Foundation in the past or develop their own format – perhaps one that is more coordinated with their district's strategic plan.

5. Award Process

The proposal amount for the 2025-2026 grant term will be the same as previous years. All submissions will be judged and awarded based on the following overall expectations ---

- a) Plan Logic: relationship to district data; current district strategic planning; ongoing professional development and leadership efforts; evidence-based strategies; clearly identified outcomes; etc.
- b) Implementation Capability: caliber, role, and experience of those selected to lead the effort. Existing process and infrastructure to support and reinforce Professional Development at the school level.
- c) Demonstrated Commitment: development of reflective structures and internal analysis to review progress over time; established communication infrastructure to align the district around the goals of the initiative and each employee's role in achieving success; leadership of the Superintendent and Board in actively supporting the grant; etc.
- d) Sustainability: concern for the development of long-term internal expertise, especially in times of change or transition.

6. Budget Guidelines

A maximum of 15 percent of funding can be spent on materials and supplies, and a maximum of

20 percent of funding can be spent on those who act as direct coordinators or catalysts for the grant's success (inclusive of benefits). Use the Effective Schools Grant Project Budget Worksheet provided by The Rapides Foundation to create your budget. A simple Budget Narrative should also be submitted describing the use of grant funds for each line item.

Note: All spending must be approved by your Foundation Technical Assistant prior to purchase.

7. Grant Proposal Submission

Effective Schools Grant proposals must be submitted using The Rapides Foundation's online application process. You can find links to the online application and to all grant materials for the Effective Schools Grant on the Foundation's website at www.rapidesfoundation.org, under the "Grants" tab.

The deadline for submitting the Effective Schools Grant proposal and supporting documents is Friday, April 11, 2025; no later than 4:00 p.m. CT.

Proposal package should include the following:

A district-level plan supported by narrative and updates to items a-d in Section 5. (Including project narrative, demonstration of need based on data, goals, implementation plans, outcome measures, communication structures and sustainability plans.)

- Budget Worksheet and Budget Narrative for 2025-2026.
- Effective Schools Grant signature page signed by the Superintendent, DistrictCoordinator, and Technical Assistant.
- District Strategic Plan

The Rapides Foundation Contacts:

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