LEAD CALIFORNIA

Request for Applications

Community Engagement Student Fellowship Program

DEADLINE: Thursday, December 4th at 4:00 pm PST

I. OVERVIEW

LEAD California is a statewide nonprofit organization supporting half a million university and college students, administrators, faculty, staff, and community members who, with our resources, expertise, training, and connections are creating innovative ways to ensure a healthy, just, and democratic society. We are committed to ensuring that all California institutions of higher education fulfill their public purpose and prepare students to be ethical leaders and compassionate citizens who make this world better for all.

LEAD California is pleased to announce the *LEAD California– Community Engagement Student Fellowship* program *(CESF)*. CESF is 4-month initiative specifically designed to support student leaders advancing service, service-learning and community engagement at member campuses throughout the state.

II. CESF OVERVIEW - WHAT DOES CESF HAVE TO OFFER?

This 4-month fellowship is designed to support 1 or 2 students on your campus who will either 1) provide direct service; or 2) infrastructure support; or 3) a combination of one and two. Each campus that is selected to participate in the fellowship will designate 1 or 2 students to receive a $500 scholarship for personal or educational enrichment (per student, max. 2 students) directly from LEAD California. This is not a grant opportunity, and there is no matching requirement for this fellowship.

Project period: January 12, 2026 – May 14, 2026.

III. WHO MAY PARTICIPATE?

To be eligible to apply and participate, your campus must be an active LEAD California member institution.

NOTE: *LEAD California Member campuses who have not participated in the CESF program previously will receive priority in the consideration of their application.*

IV. STUDENT ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible to receive this scholarship, students must:

1. Be a full-time or part-time enrolled student (undergraduate or graduate) at a LEAD California member institution. International students are not eligible for this opportunity.
2. Commit to serving a minimum of 35-50 hours during the program period. Hours may be spread out throughout the program period, or clustered within a shorter time frame. Service hours may be connected to a course, internship, practicum, or may be a stand-alone activity.
3. Not be receiving alternate compensation for these service hours (ie, a student could not use a paid internship as part of this scholarship opportunity).
4. Not have participated previously in the CESF program.

V. Required Objectives - If Selected, What would my Campus Be Responsible For?

LEAD California seeks to fund campuses that will meet the following objectives:

1. Designate a campus staff or faculty member who will identify, select, and supervise the student(s).

2. Select 1 or 2 student leaders from your campus that would become part of the cadre of CESF student fellows. Students would need to commit to serve a minimum of 35-50 hours from January 12, 2026 – May 14, 2026. At the conclusion of their commitment, students would receive a $500 scholarship directly from LEAD California. **Students must have a Social Security Number (SSN) or Tax Identification Number (TIN) to receive scholarship funds**. Students must be selected no later than February 6, 2026.

3. Assign the student to engage in direct service activities; and/or assign the student to support a service program (i.e. a special project in your campus's Office of Community Engagement)

4. Share their story. Each student will be required to share their experience through a brief video (2-3 minutes) that can be shared and disseminated. Students will sign a media release so the video can be uploaded on the LEAD California website or other media outlets. Each student will also be required to send a letter to the President of the campus, highlighting their work through the CESF opportunity. Each student will also be required to send one thank you letter to the CESF donors whose support helps make this program possible.

VI. Application Guidelines

Please submit one electronic copy of the application via email to: Piper McGinley, piper@leadcalifornia.org and include CESF in the subject line of the email. To be considered for CESF, applications must be received by LEAD California **no later than 4:00pm on Thursday, December 4, 2025.** Campuses will be notified no later than December 17, 2025.

Only one application per institution will be accepted for CESF. Application must be submitted by the campus's community engagement director or other student affairs director with direct supervision of the students involved.

LEAD California seeks applications that clearly demonstrate how you will meet the required objectives through an application narrative (2 pgs max). Incomplete applications will not be considered for review.

VII. Application Elements

1. Contact Information: Lead Contact name, title, institution name, mailing address, email and phone number.

2. 100-word abstract of proposed activities (this will be posted on our website, so please write it in a manner that can be easily understood by the general public)

3. Narrative description of proposed activities. In no more than 2 pages of double-spaced, 12-point font, please answer the following questions, in this order:

a. Describe the pressing need(s) that your CESF Student Fellow(s) will be working on, and the impact you are hoping to make with this fellowship opportunity.

b. Describe student selection: Please make sure to include if you will be asking for just 1 student fellow or 2 student fellows. How do you propose to select your student(s)? Although it is not required for this application to pre-identify the student(s) for this opportunity, if you *have* already pre-identified your student(s), please provide a one paragraph bio of the student(s) and photo, and describe why s/he was selected. *Note: The student bios do not need to be part of the 2 page maximum.*

c. Describe how you will support the student with their deliverables. Each student will be required to share their experience through a brief video (2-3 minutes) that can be shared and disseminated and through a brief progress report. Students will sign a media release so the video can be uploaded on the LEAD California website or other media outlets. Each student will also be required to send a letter to the President of the campus, highlighting their work through the CESF opportunity. Each student will also be required to send one thank you letter to CESF donors whose support helps make this program possible.

d. It is expected that the Lead Contact/Project Director or other designated campus staff or faculty will serve in some capacity as a facilitator of this experience for the student fellows of this project. Please describe what you hope the students leading this project will learn, and how you (or other designated campus staff or faculty) plan to provide support and guidance to facilitate their learning. Examples could include creating a learning plan with your students to define goals, skills to be honed and knowledge areas to be explored; meeting with your students monthly; hosting reflection sessions for the students to process their experience; or periodically checking in with students to provide guidance, training or referral to other campus resources.

**Please note that if your campus is selected to participate, we cannot guarantee that you will receive the maximum 2 slots. If selected, we will notify you if you have received either one or two fellowship slots.*

For more information: Contact Piper McGinley at LEAD California via email (piper@leadcalifornia.org).

VIII. Expectations of Selected Campuses

To foster success in developing sustainable, quality service, service-learning and community engagement initiatives, LEAD California has developed a supportive infrastructure and has high expectations of each participating institution. All successful applicants must meet the following requirements as a **required condition of funding**. Note that these items do not need to be addressed in the application narrative.

1. **Participate in a mandatory zoom meeting hosted by LEAD California on Thursday, January 22, 2026 from 11 am – 12 pm**. Topics will include project overview, progress report requirements, honoraria forms, crafting communication and other issues important to project success.

2. Complete required end of term survey in a thorough and timely manner. Surveys are conducted by LEAD California for evaluation and information purposes.

3. Acknowledge LEAD California in all materials used in project activities—flyers, press releases, web pages, announcements, etc. Successful applicants must acknowledge LEAD California with a simple reference or through use of logos.