

How to Use the Ryan's Story Grant Request Templates

A practical guide for school and district administrators

WHICH TEMPLATE TO USE

- **Public or private school** — one school requesting funding for its own assembly and parent evening.
- **Christian or faith-based school** — the same structure, with language grounded in the dignity of every person as a child of God. Use this for a diocesan fund, a church foundation, or a faith-aligned family foundation.
- **District-wide** — a superintendent requesting funding for two or more schools sharing a single day. Use this whenever more than one building is involved; the shared-day pricing makes it markedly cheaper per student, and reviewers notice.

BEFORE YOU SEND IT

1. Move the text onto your school or district letterhead and delete the instruction lines at the top.
2. Replace every item in red. Nothing in red should survive into the version you send.
3. Fill in the local data paragraph under "The Need." This matters more than anything else in the letter. Two or three real numbers from your own school — climate survey results, incident reports filed last year, counselor referrals, chronic absenteeism — will do more than every national statistic combined.
4. Confirm your fee tier. The primary market region is NY, NJ, PA, CT, RI, MA, VT, and NH; every other state uses the higher tier. Correct the budget table accordingly.
5. Hold a date first if you can. Email johnhalligan@ryansstory.org or call 802-578-8229 to check availability before you name a date in the letter. There is no deposit and no cancellation fee, so holding a date costs you nothing.
6. Consider the calendar. September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month and October is National Bullying Prevention Month — the two strongest months to make this request, because the topic is already on your community's mind and some funders tie giving to national observances. They are also the months that book out first, so apply in the spring for a fall date.
7. Swap in a local testimonial if one is available — from your own counselor or PTA president, or from a nearby school that has hosted the program.
8. Read the budget out loud. If the cost per student is under five dollars, say so explicitly. It is the most persuasive sentence in the document.

WHERE TO LOOK FOR FUNDING

Grouped by where the money actually sits. The local sources are usually both faster and likelier than the federal ones.

Money already inside your budget

- **PTA, PTO, and booster organizations.** Frequently the fastest route and sometimes the whole answer. A PTA co-sponsorship also strengthens any outside application you make.
- **Staff development and in-service funds.** This is the line most schools forget. John offers a faculty and staff session in addition to the student assembly, and professional development money is usually a separate budget from assembly money — so adding an educator session can open a second source rather than competing with the first. Ask about it when you book.
- **Title I, Title IV-A and Title V funds.** Often already budgeted. Ask your business office which of these your district draws on.

Local giving — usually decided in weeks

- **Service organizations.** Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions, Elks, Knights of Columbus, Masonic lodges, Junior League. Most fund single-event requests in the \$1,000–\$5,000 range and decide quickly. Many also have service requirements, so they may want to help organize or promote the event — which is a bonus, not a burden.
- **Community foundations and local education foundations.** Nearly every county has one, and student mental health is a standard priority area. Many districts also have their own affiliated education foundation that exists precisely for requests like this.
- **Banks.** Nearly every bank has a charitable giving fund, and applying is usually a short online form on the bank's own website rather than a full grant application. At a small local bank the turnaround is often fast, and you may well know someone on the review committee.
- **Local employers.** Corporate giving programs and community reinvestment budgets regularly fund school safety and wellness.

Health and prevention money

- **Regional hospitals and health systems.** Community benefit funds must be spent on population health. Youth mental health qualifies squarely.
- **County health department funds and city block grants.**
- **Your state Attorney General or county District Attorney.** Prosecutors' offices frequently hold community funding for youth violence and bullying prevention. Check the office's website for an application or simply call and ask.
- **Local police departments and prevention task forces.** Many departments have community outreach funds, and most regions have a substance abuse or youth violence prevention coalition with money to spend.
- **State agencies by topic.** Look up your state's Department or Division of Mental Health, Public Health, Public Safety, or Substance Abuse. These offices often know which grants exist even when they do not fund you themselves.

Student-led and community sources

- **Student clubs under national organizations.** SADD chapters and similar groups can often access prevention funding independent of the school budget, and student clubs are good at fundraising. A club co-sponsorship also gives students ownership of the event.
- **Direct community donations.** Parents and local residents will support this when asked plainly. Consider thanking donors publicly afterward.

Federal, state and regional programs

- **U.S. Department of Education** (Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools) and **U.S. Department of Justice** (OJJDP) grants. Real, but the slowest path.
- **In New York:** BOCES Arts-in-Education.
- **In New Jersey:** municipal alliance funds.

And the simplest lever of all

Two neighboring schools can share a single presentation day and split the fee. In the primary market region that takes each school from \$2,000 to \$1,500, and three schools sharing a day pay about \$1,333 each. Outside that region, two schools pay \$2,000 each instead of \$3,000. If you cannot fund it alone, call the school district next door before you give up.

QUESTIONS REVIEWERS WILL ASK — AND WHERE THE ANSWER LIVES

- **"How do you know it works?"** The evaluation table under Program Outcomes. Do not weaken it; it is the section most letters lack.
- **"Is it safe to talk about suicide with students?"** The Safe Messaging and Best-Practice Alignment section. Point to it directly if asked.
- **"What happens after the assembly?"** The Sustainability section. A one-hour event is a weak ask; a year-long effort anchored by an assembly is a strong one.
- **"Why not do this yourselves for free?"** Because students respond to a parent who lived it in a way they do not respond to a curriculum. Say so plainly.
- **"What is the school contributing?"** The in-kind lines in the budget. Fill in real dollar values rather than leaving them blank — matching contributions strengthen an application.

CONTACT

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Available school days August 15 through June 15. Dates can often be confirmed within a week when available.

Templates, lesson plans, family letters, posters, the W-9, the certificate of insurance, and the confirmation letter are all on the School Documents page of the website.

If you are partway through an application and stuck on a section, write to me. I have read a lot of these and I am glad to look at a draft.