



FCMAT Requests Applications of Interest for County Administrator at Plumas USD

District Background

The Plumas Unified School District is the primary provider of public education in Plumas County, California, covering a geographic area of approximately 2,613 square miles in the state's rural northeastern region. The district is headquartered in Qunicy and serves the diverse communities of Chester, Greenfield, Qunicy and Portola. The district operates 10 schools: four elementary schools, four junior-senior high schools, and two alternative high schools. The district is the authorizer for one charter school with a reported enrollment of approximately 350 students across all grades. Plumas USD is a community-funded district.

As of the 2024-25 academic year, the district reported an enrollment of 2,020 students in transitional kindergarten through grade 12. The student population is predominantly Caucasian (65.6%), with Hispanic students comprising 18.6%, Native American students 2.5%, African American students 0.4%, and 9.4% identifying as other ethnicities or not identifying. Additionally, 54.3% of students are classified as economically disadvantaged.

The district operates within a single-district-county structure in partnership with the Plumas County Office of Education (PCOE), under the governance of a shared five-member board. Each trustee represents a distinct area within the county and serves a four-year term. This single-district-county model is relatively rare in California. In such arrangements, offices, facilities and staff are typically shared between the school district and the county office of education. The California Department of Education's (CDE's) School Fiscal Services Division provides oversight of the combined entity.

The Fiscal Crisis and Management Team (FCMAT) published its multiyear financial projection and cash flow projection review on April 6, 2025, projecting a deficit of \$8,026,718 in the then-current 2024-25 fiscal year, a deficit of \$8,248,902 in the 2025-26 fiscal year, and a deficit of \$7,869,128 in the 2026-27 fiscal year. The deficit amounts above result in a projected negative \$4,727,146 general fund ending fund balance as of June 30, 2025, a negative \$12,976,048 general fund ending fund balance as of June 30, 2026, and a negative \$20,845,176 general fund ending fund balance as of June 30, 2027. These negative fund balances do not include the three percent standard reserve amount of approximately \$1,300,000 for each fiscal year.

At the request of the governing board, the district entered state receivership on June 27, 2025, when the governor approved Assembly Bill (AB) 121 (Chapter 8/2025) (see section 98), which included an emergency appropriation of up to \$20 million to avert fiscal insolvency. The first draw of cash under the provisions of the emergency apportionment are scheduled for early fall 2025 due to negative cash flow projections. The county superintendent has assumed all legal rights, duties, and powers of the district's governing board and superintendent. Under receivership, the district's five-member governing board serves in an advisory role until the district shows adequate progress in implementing the recommendations of a comprehensive review in five operational areas (financial management, personnel management, community relations and governance, facilities management, and pupil achievement), and the Plumas County superintendent of

schools, with the concurrence of the state superintendent of public instruction (SPI) and the president of the State Board of Education (SBE), determines that the district has built sufficient capacity to self-govern.

The Position

The county administrator at Plumas USD serves under the direction and supervision of the county superintendent and occupies a unique role. The administrator is not a superintendent, but rather serves as a hybrid of governing board, superintendent, fiscal expert, turnaround specialist, systems developer, master communicator, advocate for students, and strategic implementer, called upon to lead the district through the challenging initial steps of recovery in all operational areas. As the inaugural (and it is hoped only) county administrator in Plumas USD, the successful candidate will have a rare leadership opportunity to rebuild the district and recover from an estimated 20% budget imbalance, organizational dysfunction, and community distrust to meeting the minimum milestone for returning to self-governance, ideally within three years. The ideal administrator will have the ability to establish and lead the district's continuous improvement process to increase all measures of student achievement, restore fiscal solvency, strengthen and balance the district's fiscal, human and facility resources, and design and strategically implement policies, procedures, systems and structures — all with an eye to sustainability and a return to local governance.

Working in partnership with the PCOE, the FCMAT, the CDE and the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE), this proven leader will establish and implement an action plan that prioritizes the items below from among the many outstanding items in the recovery process:

- Mitigate an approximate \$8 million annual budget deficit.
- Implement budget and fiscal practices that result in long-term solvency.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive, coherent transitional kindergarten through grade 12 instructional program that improves teaching and learning at all schools for all students.
- Prepare the board of education to govern the district upon return of local governance authority.
- Rebuild the district staff and community's trust of district governance and leadership systems and processes.
- Mentor and coach district staff.
- Establish and implement an effective single-district-county organizational structure using best practices.

Currently, the district is being led by the county superintendent, following the departure of a joint county superintendent/district superintendent in the fall of 2024 and an interim district superintendent from fall 2024 through June 2025. The current county superintendent was appointed to fill the vacant county superintendent of schools which is an elected position.

Candidate Qualifications

The successful candidate will be a transformative leader who has demonstrated prior success in educational organization leadership, specifically in education finance, and who cares about all students and their academic and personal achievement. Possession of a California teaching or administrative services credential is desired but not required. The ideal candidate will have a professional and personal profile that includes the following:

- History of student-centered leadership that values academic achievement, and social and emotional success, for all students.
- Commitment to the district's recovery and long-term success, including reestablishing local control.
- Proven track record of increasing student achievement in a rural and diverse school district like Plumas.
- Demonstrated ability to develop single-district-county organizational systems and processes, strategic implementation, monitoring and accountability structures, and capacity-building across all functional areas.
- Proven track record of courage and technical acumen to address and resolve fiscal challenges.
- Excellent communicator who develops trust, conveys a sense of urgency, exemplifies honesty and integrity, and instills hope.
- Demonstrated ability to build effective communication strategies with all partners within the Plumas community in a manner that fosters transparency and includes successes and challenges.
- Commitment to honor and respect the district's traditions around the environment.
- Visible leader who listens, is seen on campus and in classrooms, and fully participates with the community in all regards.
- History of collaborating with and among all partner groups (students, teachers, classified staff, administrators, parents, business and civic members, advisory board, associations, county office, and state agencies) to support a vision for student success and financial accountability and stability.
- Experience building a talented team — recruiting, coaching, supporting, motivating, respecting, and building capacity.
- Respectful, active partner with employees and their respective associations.
- Set and communicate clear expectations.
- Confident, compassionate, professional and courageous individual.
- Demonstrated commitment to holding self and others accountable.
- Willingness to make difficult decisions.
- Sets an example personally for others to do their best; earns respect by positive and supportive words and actions, and leads with empathy.
- Ability to communicate a vision in actionable terms and successfully lead the action required.
- Strong school business background.
- Engaging, humble leader with exceptional people skills.
- Exceptional listening skills, approachable, responsive and accepts the counsel of others

- Engages with and respects the advisory board’s perspectives and opinions, and works to build a strong and effective governance team.

Compensation

The successful candidate will be offered a competitive salary in the \$275,000 range and a comprehensive benefits package. A three-year contract is desirable to demonstrate commitment and stability to guide the district through recovery and return to self-governance, with a work calendar of 244 days per year, including negotiated vacation days. The position is eligible for CalSTRS or CalPERS retirement credit, and thus is subject to post-retirement earnings limits for current annuitants. Special terms apply to existing employees of the CDE or PCOE. Final terms will be negotiable with the county superintendent.

Selection Process

FCMAT is designated as the agency that must identify and vet a list of qualified candidates for the position. The county superintendent will establish and coordinate a two-step interview process to narrow the list of candidates to finalists. The county superintendent, with the concurrence of the SPI and the president of the SBE, will make the final selection.

Tentative Selection Timeline

- Application deadline: Wednesday, August 6, 2025 at 5 p.m.
- Initial screening: Friday, August 8, 2025.
- Notification to applicants selected for interviews: August 11, 2025.
- Candidate interviews by PCOE: Monday, August 25, 2025.
- Appointment by PCOE/SPI/president of SBE: Monday, September 1, 2025.

Dates above are shown for planning purposes and may be subject to change.

Application Procedure

Initial screening will be based on the following two required items, which must be submitted by the application deadline:

1. A letter of interest

The letter of interest must address the following seven questions derived from the input at listening meetings held in the community. There is no minimum or maximum word count per answer. Candidates should be clear and concise in their responses, using no more than 700 words per answer as a guide.

- The county administrator must have a proven track record in school finance. Please describe the transformation you led and the legacy you established in one or more recent positions relative to your school finance experience.
- As the county administrator, your role is to work yourself out of a job in the next three years by ensuring the return of local governance authority. How will you build the capacity of the staff to ensure a leadership succession plan at all levels?

- Describe how you will communicate to the staff, community and advisory board about your assessment of challenges and opportunities, recommendations and decisions, and daily activities of moving the district forward.
- Describe how you will build relationships with district staff, parents, and community partners.
- Explain how you will approach an estimated 20% annual deficit and restore fiscal stability over the next 36 months while ensuring advances in student achievement.
- Describe your experience leading in a small, rural, economically diverse environment and how you built on the strength of such diversity with students, families, staff, and the community. Also describe how you will honor and respect the district's traditions that value the environment and the community's ties to the land.
- Briefly describe your view and approach to each of the following: a) personal accountability, b) organizational accountability, c) empathy, d) collaborative leadership, e) decision-making, and f) overcoming internal and external distrust.

2. A current resumé

Candidates selected for the first round of interviews will be required to submit the following items:

- A fully completed PCOE application form.
- Contact information for five (5) current references (no letters of recommendation are required) familiar with your work as it relates to this position.

Candidates selected for the second round of interviews will be required to submit the following materials:

- Verification of degrees and credentials (if any).

Instructions and deadlines for these additional required items will be provided to those selected for interviews. Receipt of applications will be acknowledged, and materials submitted will be treated confidentially. The county superintendent or her designee reserves the right to visit the districts and communities of candidates prior to a final selection.

Application

Application instructions and additional resources are available at <https://www.fcmat.org/plumas>.

Initial applications shall be submitted via email to Plumas@fcmat.org **no later than 5 p.m. on Wednesday, August 6, 2025.**

Questions may be submitted via email to Plumas@fcmat.org. Any contact with the Plumas County superintendent of schools, the SPI or the president of the SBE to attempt to influence the selection process will be considered a breach of professional ethics and a basis for disqualification of an applicant.