

Request for Application

Program Guidelines

2025-2026 ESC Special Education Liaison Grant

Authorized by Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), as amended (P.L. 108-446), Part B, Section 611; 34 CFR 300.704(b)
Other State-Level Activities

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Introduction to the Program Guidelines

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) administers federal¹ and state grant awards to its subgrantees² to carry out a program. Such entities include primarily school systems (referred to as local educational agencies [LEAs] in statutes), including independent school districts and charter schools; education service centers (ESCs); and, to a lesser degree, institutions of higher education (IHEs), nonprofit organizations (NPOs), and other statutorily allowable organizations. The following Program Guidelines apply to all eligible subgrantees for the designated grant program.

The Program Guidelines, as part of the request for application (RFA), are to be used in conjunction with the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#) and any application instructions or other RFA requirements, as listed for the grant on the [TEA Grant Opportunities](#) page. The Standard Application System (SAS) consists of Application Part 1 (PDF narrative schedules) and Application Part 2 (Excel budget schedules). An eligible applicant must submit both parts of the SAS to apply for funding, unless specifically delineated in these guidelines.

For applicants selected for funding, all guidelines and instructions will be incorporated by reference into the Notice of Grant Award (NOGA).

Reference to the General and Fiscal Guidelines

The Program Guidelines provide information specifically relevant to this grant program. The [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#) provide information relevant to all TEA grant programs. Throughout the Program Guidelines, cross-references are given to applicable sections of the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#). It is critical that you review all cross-referenced sections when preparing your application.

Errata Notices

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), Errata Notices.

¹ TEA is the grantee and pass-through entity for federal education funding awarded by the U.S. Department of Education (USDE). *Grantee* is defined as the legal entity to which a grant is awarded and that is accountable to the federal government for the use of the funds provided. The term “grantee” does not include any secondary recipients, such as subgrantees and contractors, that may receive funds from a grantee pursuant to a subgrant or contract. (34 CFR §77.1) *Pass-through entity* is defined as a recipient or subrecipient that provides a subaward to a subrecipient (including lower tier subrecipients) to carry out part of a federal program. (2 CFR §200.1)

² *Subgrantee* is defined by TEA to be the same as a *subrecipient*, which is defined in 2 CFR §200.1 as an entity that receives a subaward from a pass-through entity to carry out part of a federal award. The term does not include an individual that is a beneficiary or participant of the program. *Subgrantee* is defined in 34 CFR §77.1 as the legal entity to which a subgrant is awarded and that is accountable to the grantee for the use of the funds provided. For purposes of the request for application (RFA), TEA may use the terms *subgrantee*, *grantee*, *subrecipient*, and *applicant* synonymously.

Contact for Clarifying Information

Grant Program Contact

Stephanie Koch, Strategic Integration Manager
Special Populations Systemwide Integration Division
Stephanie.Koch@tea.texas.gov
Phone: (512) 463-9414

Additional Program Contact

Dana Garza, Strategic Integration Manager
Special Populations Systemwide Integration Division
Dana.Garza@tea.texas.gov
Phone: (512) 463-9414

Funding Contact

Elizabeth Sanchez, Grant Manager
Grants Administration Division
Elizabeth.Sanchez@tea.texas.gov
Phone: (512) 463-8525

U.S. Department of Education and/or State Appropriations

The following is provided in compliance with federal appropriations acts:

Category	Amount
Total funds available for this project	\$15,264,910
Percentage to be financed with federal funds	100%
Amount of federal funds	\$15,264,910
Percentage to be financed from nonfederal sources	0%
Amount of nonfederal funds	\$0

Grant Timeline

Due dates related to the grant, including reporting dates, are available in the Critical Events section listed on the [TEA Grant Opportunities](#) page. Grantees are responsible for regularly monitoring the webpage for updated grant information and for meeting all due dates and other grant requirements.

Grant at a Glance

This section provides detailed information about the grant program.

Program Purpose, Goals, and Objectives

The main goal of the Special Education Liaison Grant is to improve outcomes of students receiving special education services through the provision of timely, targeted program support for a school system. This grant provides positions that integrate and align Texas Education Agency (TEA) initiatives and expectations for school systems. There is an expectation to collaborate with the TEA to meet all program requirements and performance measures and support statewide collaboration among the Education Service Center's special education SPED Liaisons, Strategic Integration Liaisons (SILs), and Lead SILs.

Education Service Center Special Education Liaisons (ESC SPED Liaisons):

The SPED Liaisons utilize data analysis to identify individual school system needs and connect school systems to available resources, professional development, and technical assistance. The work of the ESC SPED Liaisons will result in providing targeted and timely support to school systems, as well as managing data and projects that have the potential for high impact, replication, and scaling in the field.

Education Service Center Strategic Integration Liaisons (ESC SILs):

The SILs support development in the school system leadership team's capacity to address two areas. 1- Effectively implement a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS). MTSS is an integrated framework for the systemic alignment of evidence-based prevention and intervention practices to support the needs of all students. 2-Support meaningful access to ensure that students with disabilities have equal opportunities to engage with and make progress in the general education curriculum and environment that includes implementing inclusive practices for students receiving special education and related services. SILs utilize data analysis to identify individual school system needs. School systems coaching is a vital role of the SIL and will result in building district capacity to improve and change system level processes.

Education Service Center Lead Strategic Integration Liaisons (ESC Lead SILs)

The Lead SILs provide onboarding and training, support, coaching, and mentoring to all ESC SILs. The Lead SILs' support provided to all SILs will result in building knowledge, skills, and abilities to increase

district-level capacity to improve and change system level processes. They will collaborate to guide SILs to support effective school system implementation of district-level systems for Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) or meaningful access process for students receiving special education and related services.

Eligible Applicants

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), Eligibility for Funding.

An eligibility list is posted by regional ESC in the Application and Support Information section of the [TEA Grant Opportunities](#) page.

Shared Services Arrangement

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), Shared Services Arrangements.

Shared services arrangements (SSAs) are not allowed.

Cost Share or Matching Requirement

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), Cost Share/Match Requirement.

There is no cost share or matching requirement for this grant program.

Supplement, Not Supplant

For supplement, not supplant guidance, see the Supplement, Not Supplant Handbook on the Department of Grant Compliance and Administration's [Training and Other Resources](#) page.

The supplement, not supplant provision does not apply to this grant program.

Limitation of Administrative Funds

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), Administrative Costs.

NOTE: Administrative funds include **both** direct administrative costs **and** allowable indirect costs.

Direct Administrative Costs

TEA limits the amount of direct administrative costs for this grant program to no more than 8% of the total grant award.

Indirect Costs

For this grant program, the grantee may claim a maximum for allowable indirect costs equal to its current approved unrestricted indirect cost rate.

To calculate the maximum indirect costs that can be claimed for a grant, complete the [Maximum Indirect Costs Worksheet](#), located on the Grants Administration Division's [Grant Resources](#) page.

Pre-Award Costs

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), Pre-Award Costs.

Pre-award costs are not permitted for this grant.

Application Requirements and Assurances

This section identifies the types of requirements in which applicants must comply to be eligible for funding:

- Statutory requirements (requirements defined in the authorizing statute)
- TEA program requirements (requirements defined by TEA program staff)

Statutory Requirements

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), Statutory Requirements.

Per Section 22.0834 of the Texas Education Code (TEC), any person offered employment by any entity that contracts with TEA or receives grant funds administered by TEA (i.e., a grantee or subgrantee) is subject to the fingerprinting requirement. TEA is prohibited from awarding grant funds to any entity, including nonprofit organizations, that fails to comply with this requirement. For details, refer to the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), Fingerprinting Requirement.

TEA Program Requirements

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), TEA Program Requirements.

In addition to the statutory requirements, TEA has established the following program requirements. The applicant must comply with each of these requirements in the application to be considered for funding:

SPED Liaisons TEA Program Requirements:

1. Successfully embed Design Thinking and continuous improvement strategy implementation through focus, leverage, engagement and accountability to meet goals outlined in the ESC Special Liaison performance measures 1 and 2.

2. Working primarily with school system special education and campus leaders, increase the knowledge, skills, and motivation of school system teams to analyze data relevant to students receiving special education services and supports; identify a problem; reflect critically on end-user input, root causes and potential solutions; create a plan for improvement that includes sustainability of progress; purposefully addresses change management; and maintain a cadence of internal accountability.
3. Working primarily with school system special education and campus leaders, identify target school system needs relevant to students receiving special education services and supports and connect them to supports and resources that effectively meet those needs.
4. Deliver and/or support regional professional development to school systems regarding Differentiated Monitoring and Support procedures. Conduct check-ins with school system teams to support continuous improvement in collaboration with TEAs Department of Review and Support staff and resources.
5. Liaisons will prioritize their time to prepare for active participation and attendance at monthly PLCs, attend check-ins with TEA Grant Manager, and complete onboarding requirements within timeline.
6. Annually, each ESC SPED Liaison team conducts one presentation that aligns work from an Essential Function or Program Requirement during PLC time.

Strategic Integration Liaisons TEA Program Requirements:

1. SILs will prioritize their time to prepare for active participation and attendance at monthly PLCs, attend office hours and Lead SIL coaching, participate in routine collaboration and engagement with TEA and Lead SILs, and complete onboarding and certification requirements within timeline.
2. Upon certification, SILs will utilize the tools and resources provided by TEA to focus their work at a minimum of three school systems annually.
3. Utilize the SIL Process and Fidelity of Implementation (FOI) for evidence-based approaches to document MTSS or meaningful access as a solution to the identified School System Needs.
4. Engage in regular outreach promoting the SIL project to gain interest among school systems within their region.

Lead Strategic Integration Liaisons TEA Program Requirements:

1. Lead SILs will prioritize their time, including but not limited to, 1 week a month for facilitating PLCs, 3 days a week for PLC preparation, 1 day a week minimum for office hours, coaching, and observations, 2 days a month for “off-cycle” onboarding, 1 day a month for “make-up” certification, and 1 hour a week minimum for TEA/Lead SIL collaboration so they can receive training, monitor, facilitate, and ensure support for SILs is provided.
2. Engage in and/or lead monthly collaboration, coaching, and mentorship with all SILs.

3. Engage in routine collaboration and engagement with TEA including TOT training and other support as needed.
4. Support the alignment, develop, and implementation of tools to promote TEA and ESC cross-functional initiatives as they pertain to the SIL Process and Fidelity of Implementation (FOI).
5. Track the implementation and completion of SIL certification.

The official job title assigned to the staff member accepting this position must include the following words for the appropriate group on all applicable ESC identifiers (e.g. job description, website, email signature, business cards): “Liaison” and “ESC” or “Special Education”; “Strategic Integration Liaison”; “Lead Strategic Integration Liaison.”

The grantee agrees that positions funded with this grant must be supervised, or co-supervised, by a member of the ESC Special Education staff.

The grantee agrees to support the requirement for positions funded through this grant to attend monthly PLC meetings, virtually and face to face, that provide trainings, feedback loop conversations, and collaborative group time. All activities support connecting policy and practice statewide to address identified unmet needs and collaborate on supports that benefit the entire state. A maximum of 5 PLC days may be missed per grant year. Any FMLA accommodations necessary will follow the individual ESC’s processes and procedures.

The grant program will be funded by reimbursement once the NOGA has been issued and the grantee submits payment requests through the Expenditure Reporting (ER) system. See [Expenditure Reporting](#). The grantee is required to regularly request payment for allowable expenditures as grant program requirements are carried out.

Program-Specific Assurances

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), Provisions and Assurances.

The program-specific assurances for this grant program are listed in the Application Part 1.

Allowable Activities and Use of Funds

Refer to the [Budgeting Costs Guidance Handbook](#) on the Grants Administration Division’s [Grant Resources](#) page for general guidance on allowable activities and use of funds.

Note regarding travel costs, if allowable per guidance below: Any personnel approved in this grant must be reimbursed for travel according to the applicant's written policies and procedures; however, reimbursement may not exceed State of Texas mileage allowance, General Services Administration (GSA) hotel rate, and per diem rate existing in the current Texas State Appropriations Act. The state

travel guidelines require only reimbursement of actual costs paid and, therefore, prohibit per diem payments to travelers without reconciliation to actual costs expended. Note: Contractor travel is paid as it is described in the individual contract, not to exceed the State rates, and may or may not be delineated out specifically in the contract.

Allowable activities and use of funds for this grant include only the following:

General Allowable Activities and Use of Funds

- Activities that are reasonable and necessary to fulfill the TEA Program Requirements and Performance Measures for the ESC Special Education Liaison Grant
- Payroll costs for staff with direct responsibility under this grant
- Professional and contracted services
- Professional Development through a third party must have prior approval by TEA
- Consumable and durable supplies and materials
- TEA required training costs for ESC Liaisons (SPED Liaisons, SILs, and Lead SILs) as part of Program Requirements and Performance Measures
- Positions funded with this grant must be a separate position from ESC staff and must adhere to the 100% funding provision in the Grant Assurances.
- Debt services (lease liabilities for terms greater than 12 months) — allowable costs include:
 - Subscription-based Information Technology Arrangement (SBITA) — Principal Costs (6514)
 - Subscription-based Information Technology Arrangement (SBITA) — Interest Costs (6526)
- In-state travel as necessary to meet the program requirements of this grant. Travel costs must follow the travel guidance provided at the beginning of this Allowable Activities and Use of Funds section.
 - Travel funds allocated for the six (6) in person PLC program requirements will be returned for each FTE not attending the full in-person PLC.

Other Allowable Operating Costs Requiring Specific Approval in the Grant Application (6400)

Out-of-State Travel

Out-of-state travel costs are allowable. Out-of-state travel costs should be minimal. Travel costs are allowable as long as the expenses for transportation, lodging, subsistence, and related items are only incurred by employees on official business of the grantee and follow the grantee's regular business

operations and written travel policy. Travel cost reimbursement must follow the travel guidance provided at the beginning of this Allowable Activities and Use of Funds section.

Out-of-state travel will require a written justification form to be maintained locally and made available to TEA upon request. To access the Justification for Out-of-State Travel form, refer to the [Forms for Prior Approval, Disclosure, and Justification](#) page.

Unallowable Activities and Use of Funds

Refer to the [Budgeting Costs Guidance Handbook](#) on the Grants Administration Division's [Grant Resources](#) page for general guidance on unallowable costs.

In addition, unallowable activities and use of funds for this grant include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Debt services (lease liabilities for terms greater than 12 months) — unallowable costs include:
 - Capital Lease Liability — Principal Costs (6512)
 - Capital Lease Liability — Interest Costs (6522)
 - Interest on Debt Costs (6523)
- Audit services for federally funded grants, unless the subrecipient meets the Uniform Grant Guidance (UGG) threshold and is required to conduct the federal audit
- Capital outlay
- Travel for students to conferences
- Field trips
- Stipends for non-employees
- Non-employee costs for conferences
- Travel costs for officials such as executive director, superintendent, or board members
- Cost of membership in any civic or community organization
- Hosting or sponsoring of conferences
- Advisory councils
- Cost of electronic publications and/or subscriptions for staff not implementing grant requirements
- Responsibilities that are not specifically authorized in this grant application
- Split-funding this position with funds that are not awarded through this grant application
- Salaries of personnel at ESCs with job descriptions other than those approved through the ESC Special Education Liaison Grant

- Any activity not specified above in the Allowable Activities and Use of Funds section

Performance Measures

The applicant agrees to collect data and report on the following mandatory performance measures:

General:

The grantee agrees to collect data and report to the TEA all program requirements and performance measures.

SPED Liaisons Performance Measures:

1. **Essential Function #1:** 80% of school systems identified through RDA as Determination Level (DL) 2, 3, or 4 are engaged and receiving support from ESC SPED Liaisons.

Activities:

- a. Assess and agree to the support and assistance to be made available to each individual site and/or collectively to a number of sites.
 - b. Schedule virtual and onsite meetings based on the goals of the team and stakeholders.
 - c. Tailor support based on needs of the team and systems stakeholders.
 - d. Assess the effectiveness of the level of support in meeting needs, goals, and context of the implementation effort.
2. **Essential Function #2:** 80% of school systems who receive technical assistance and support from ESC liaisons show evidence the school systems' need was met as evidenced in the school system survey.

Activities:

- a. Provide technical assistance to school systems stakeholders by connecting them to resources, individuals, and/or providing support.
- b. Maintain ongoing communication with school systems to support implementation efforts.
- c. Assess the effectiveness of the level of support in meeting needs, goals, and context of the implementation effort.

Strategic Integration Liaisons Performance Measures

1. **Essential Function #1: Executive Coaching and Systems Level Change:** Support school systems to understand, design, and implement systems change that integrate supports and resources for students with disabilities into new and existing systems within the school. *Metric: By August*

31, 2026, SILs will be engaged with 2 school systems on implementing systems change that integrate supports and resources for students with disabilities.

Activities:

- a. Work with school system leadership teams to increase the knowledge, skills, and motivation of school system teams utilizing a fidelity of implementation rubric for systems change.
 - b. Jointly facilitate meetings with school system leadership teams using the gradual release process, which includes current state analysis, multi-year strategic planning, goal setting, and implementation planning.
 - c. Utilize data analysis and school system input to create a plan for systems change that includes sustainability of progress to identify a problem, reflect critically on end-user input, root causes and potential solutions, and maintain a cadence of internal accountability.
 - d. Align school system strategic goals, activities, and priorities with the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and ESC ecosystem of support.
 - e. Curate statewide resources tailored to the school system-specific needs to support the implementation of MTSS and meaningful access.
 - f. Ensure quality data collection and submission of metrics and other applicable project reporting.
2. **Essential Function #2: Collaboration:** Manage, support, and/or collaborate directly with TEA, ESC, and school system staff to develop and disseminate effective resources, products, and materials that are intentionally designed to support school systems to understand, design, and implement effective systems level change. *Metric: 80% of School System Action Plans contain alignment with other agency-level initiatives currently being implemented in the district and indicate the use of the TEA ecosystem of resources and support.*

Activities:

- a. Support school systems with meaningful access or MTSS systems-level change management by providing executive level coaching and supporting the school system with facilitated continuous improvement.
 - b. Coordinate or provide school system leadership learning opportunities through targeted professional development, implementation support, coaching related to meaningful access and MTSS, and ongoing connection and integration of Texas Strategic Leadership (TSL), Effective Schools Framework (ESF), Effective Districts Framework (EDF), High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM), Texas Instructional Leadership (TIL), any other TEA initiatives, and resources/services provided by the ESC.
 - c. Embed appropriate use of collaborative problem-solving approaches to achieve program goals (i.e. Design Thinking, 4 Disciplines of Execution (4DX) processes, executive systems coaching).
3. **Essential Function #3: Professional Development:** SILs continuously engage in their own growth and learning by attending and engaging in high-quality professional development.

Metric: One year from the date of hire, 100% of the certification requirements are completed by SILs.

- a. Obtain all required certifications as a SIL, including but not limited to systems-level coaching, change management, and MTSS or meaningful access.
- b. Engage in routine collaboration and coaching with the TEA and Lead SILs.
- c. Participate in ongoing professional development to build leadership, communication skills, and content knowledge to support continuous improvement and a growth mindset.
- d. Participate and demonstrate content knowledge, specifically connected to statewide initiatives such as Tiered Interventions using Evidenced Based Research (TIER), meaningful access school accountability and improvement frameworks, TIL, and other TEA-aligned projects.

Lead Strategic Integration Liaisons Performance Measures (ESC 16 Only)

1. **Essential Function #1: Strategic Integration and Alignment:** Lead SILs will develop processes and tools that allow for SIL resource management and effortless alignment with various cross-agency and ESC initiatives. *Metric: 80% of School System Action Plans contain alignment with other agency-level initiatives currently being implemented in the district and indicate the use of the TEA ecosystem of resources and support.*

Activities:

- a. Support the alignment and develop tools to promote TEA and ESC cross-functional initiatives as they pertain to the SIL project (Effective District Framework, Effective Schools Framework, Texas Instructional Leadership, etc.).
 - b. Serve as a subject matter expert on implementing SIL process and MTSS or meaningful access systems.
 - c. Curate statewide and ESC resources to align support tied to Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) and meaningful access that will assist school systems with robust and comprehensive implementation supports.
 - d. Develop, maintain, and monitor SIL digital repositories to house agendas, training, and other resources and tools so that they are easily accessible to statewide SILs.
2. **Essential Function #2: Professional Development:** Lead SILs continuously engage in their own growth and learning, while also providing high quality professional development and training to the statewide SILs. *Metric: One year from the date of hire, 100% of the certification requirements are completed by Lead SILs.*

Activities:

- a. Participate in ongoing professional development to increase skills aligned with strong leadership, communication, and content knowledge to support continuous improvement and a growth mindset.

- b. Assess training needs through surveys, interviews with employees, or consultations with various stakeholders.
 - c. Design and deliver high quality professional development to SILs.
 - d. Embed Design Thinking, 4 Disciplines of Execution (4DX) processes, and executive systems coaching into professional development.
 - e. Provide strong content knowledge and facilitation skills in the delivery of Trainer of Trainers professional development sessions.
 - f. Develop and deliver individualized trainings to meet the identified targeted needs of SILs and school systems based on feedback, needs, and data analysis.
3. **Essential Function #3: Coaching and Collaboration:** Lead SILs will collaborate regularly with TEA and ESC personnel and provide routine coaching to SILs. *Metric: 80% of SILs have the resources and capacity to execute the implementation process as evidenced through surveys and Lead SIL office hours.*
- a. Plan and design ongoing virtual and in person SIL professional development in partnership with TEA and ESC personnel.
 - b. Provide ongoing virtual coaching using evidenced-based practices to SILs across Texas.
 - c. Provide ongoing input and participate in feedback loops and collaborative activities that connect Texas state policy and practice.
 - d. Provide communication and reporting to TEA as required per the grant.
 - e. Develop and oversee internal and external communication strategies to facilitate collaboration between TEA, ESCs, and SILs.
4. **Essential Function #4: Goal Setting and Progress Tracking:** Lead SILs will collect and report data, and monitor the fidelity of implementation of SIL materials and processes. *Metric: 80% of SILs utilize data collection to track school system entry points for TEA initiatives, resources, and supports.*
- a. Track and maintain the certification and onboarding process of SILs.
 - b. Collect, track, and report data to TEA as required by the grant regarding school system and SIL related products and project components.
 - c. Use Qualtrics to maintain a data dashboard and update data by TEA determined deadlines.
 - d. Support and monitor fidelity of implementation (FOI) using a SIL implementation FOI rubric.
 - e. Conduct statewide data analysis, report progress, and present performance data to various stakeholders as requested and approved by TEA.

Federal Grant Requirements

Equitable Access and Participation

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), Equitable Access and Participation.

This requirement does apply to this federally funded grant program.

Private Nonprofit School Participation

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), Private Nonprofit School Participation.

This requirement does not apply to this federally funded grant program.

Maintenance of Effort

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), Maintenance of Effort.

This requirement does not apply to this federally funded grant program.

Attachments

There are two types of attachments that may be required to be submitted with your application:

Required Fiscal-Related Attachments

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), Fiscal-Related Documentation Required to Be on File, for a general description of fiscal-related documents that can be required as attachments to the application.

Required Program-Related Attachments

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), Required Program-Related Attachments, for a general description of program-related documents that can be required as attachments to the application.

No program-related attachments are required for this grant program.