

Informal Discretionary Competition (IDC)

Program Guidelines

2026-2027 School Bus Safety Grant Program

IDC Application Due Date

IDC Application Due Date 5:00p.m. Central Time, August 14,
2026

Authorized by General Appropriations Act (GAA), Article III,
Rider 85, 89th Texas Legislature

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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).

Requirement for Username and Password

To access eGrants and apply for this grant, you must have access to the [TEA Login \(TEAL\)](#). Follow these steps to apply for usernames and passwords on TEAL:

1. Visit the [TEA Login \(TEAL\)](#) page of the TEA website. Select [Request New User Account](#) to begin the process of applying for a TEAL account online.
2. Once you have been assigned a TEA Login (TEAL) account, log into TEAL and under Self-Service select My Application Accounts.
3. The My Accounts tab will open. Select Request New Account, then find eGrants in the list and follow the instructions to submit your request.

¹ TEA is the grantee and pass-through entity for federal education funding. *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. For purposes of the request for application (RFA), TEA may use the terms *subgrantee*, *grantee*, *subrecipient*, and *applicant* synonymously.

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4. Entities with existing TEAL accounts but no eGrants accounts should email competitivegrants@tea.texas.gov to ensure proper access to eGrants and this application.
5. If the application does not appear in your “Apply for Eligible Grants” section in your eGrants homepage, please email competitivegrants@tea.texas.gov .
6. For those entities without a prior relationship with TEA, and no TEAL accounts please email competitivegrants@tea.texas.gov with the following information prior to requesting a TEAL account:
 - a. Entity name
 - b. Entity full address – Street, city, state, zip code
 - c. County
 - d. Entity phone number
 - e. Entity email address
 - f. Entity Legal Authority - Name, title, email and phone
 - g. Entity Legal Authority Backup – Name, title, email and phone
 - h. Vendor ID/FEIN
7. All requests for TEAL and eGrants accounts must be submitted well in advance of the application deadline to avoid delays. Please note that this application process is both detailed and time intensive. It is the applicant’s responsibility to plan accordingly and allocate sufficient time to complete, certify, and submit the application before the deadline.

Late submissions caused by delays in obtaining TEAL or eGrants access, or by technical issues, will not be accepted under any circumstances. To ensure a smooth process, we strongly recommend initiating account setup and application work as early as possible.

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 the grantee review all cross-referenced sections when preparing the application.

Errata Notices

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

Overview of IDC Process

The following steps provide a high-level overview of the process for responding to Informal Discretionary Competition (IDC), including submitting an IDC application, and being selected for funding:

1. TEA publishes IDC application and supporting documents on the [TEA Grant Opportunities](#).
2. Eligible applicants submit the programmatic needs assessment application via Qualtrics by the specified deadline in this document.
3. IDC applications are reviewed and scored. Note: The highest scoring applicants may be required to attend an oral interview or respond to questions regarding their IDC application.
4. TEA announces applicants selected for funding on the TEA [Grants Awarded Data](#) webpage.
5. Applicants selected for funding will be required to submit and certify an eGrant funding application including assurances and a budget summary to receive funding. Note: All data submitted in the needs assessment application is incorporated into the eGrants funding application under the Notice of Grant Award (NOGA).
6. TEA staff conducts budget negotiations on the IDC application.
7. Notice of Grant Award (NOGA) issued upon successful completion of the negotiation process.

Email Bulletins

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), GovDelivery Bulletins, as applicable.

Contact for Clarifying Information

Grant Program Contact

Matt Simcock
Office of School Safety and Security
matt.simcock@tea.texas.gov
Phone: (512) 702-2414

Funding Contact

Paul Michels, Grant Manager
Grants Administration Division
Paul.michels@tea.texas.gov
Phone: (512) 463-9777

US Department of Education and/or State Appropriations

The following is provided in compliance with the US Department of Education Appropriations Act:

Category	Amount
Total funds available for this project	\$10,000,000
Percentage to be financed with federal funds	0%
Amount of federal funds	\$0
Percentage to be financed from nonfederal sources	100%
Amount of nonfederal funds	\$10,000,000

IDC Timeline

For all dates related to the grant, including reporting dates, see the [TEA Grant Opportunities](#) page. If a report due date falls on a weekend or holiday, the report will be due the following business day. All dates except the grant ending date may vary slightly as conditions require.

Date	Event
June 18, 2026	IDC application available on the TEA Grant Opportunities page
June 24, 2026	TEA will host Office Hours to answer questions about this grant opportunity. Office Hours dates are June 24, July 8, July 22, and August 5 at 2:00pm Central Time. Register HERE .
July, 31, 2026	Last date to submit questions for FAQs to TEA by submitting an email to safeschools@tea.texas.gov by 11:59 p.m., Central Time. See General and Fiscal Guidelines , Frequently Asked Questions.
August 4, 2026	FAQs posted to TEA Grant Opportunities page.
August 14, 2026	Due date for the IDC Qualtrics application found at https://tea.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3De2tQaAh0rjc8K . The IDC application must be received by the TEA by August 14, 2026 at 5:00 p.m., Central Time . See General and Fiscal Guidelines , <i>IDC Application Due Date and Time</i>
August 14, 2026 – August 28, 2026	IDC review period See General and Fiscal Guidelines , <i>IDC Review Process</i>
September 15, 2026	Anticipated award announcement
September 15, 2026	Beginning date of grant (if selected for funding) See General and Fiscal Guidelines , <i>Grant Period</i>
September 23, 2026	eGrants ADC and Application opens for awarded applicants
October 23, 2026	Due Date for eGrants Application
June 2, 2027	Final date to submit an amendment
August 31, 2027	Ending date of grant See General and Fiscal Guidelines , <i>Grant Period</i>

IDC at a Glance

This section provides fundamental information pertinent to the grant program.

Authorizing Legislation

Texas Legislature, 89th Session, SB 1 Rider 85, School Bus Safety Grant Program

Purpose of Program

The purpose of this grant program is to assist school systems with retrofitting school buses with three-point seat belts. The seat belts should comply with the safety standards established by the Department of Public Safety in accordance with Texas Education Code, Section 34.002, Texas Administrative Code, Title 37, Chapter 14, and any other applicable laws.

Eligible Applicants

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

The eligible applicants are school districts or open enrollment charter schools meeting the following criteria:

- Must be eligible for the transportation allotment, under Texas Education Code, Section 48.151
- Must have completed the SB 546 Bus Study
 - If you have questions about completing the SB 546 Bus Study, please reach out to the Office of School Safety and Security at safeschools@tea.texas.gov.

School systems will receive funding according to the number of eligible school buses reported through SB 546 with a maximum award of \$500,000 per school system. Funds will be awarded as available with priority given to those with highest points. If funds are available after the initial funding allocation, additional funds will be added to the school systems who have reached the maximum grant award of \$500,000.

Shared Services Arrangements (SSAs)

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

Shared services arrangements (SSAs) are not allowed.

Application Funding

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#): *Continuation Funding, Fund Management, and Use of Funds*.

Selection of Applicants for Funding

Applicants will be selected in rank order.

Selection of Applicants for Funding Data provided by applicants in the Qualtrics data application will be verified by TEA staff (against existing data sources) and then entered into a formula calculation to determine grant award amounts.

Step One: Priority Point Calculation

Each school system is assigned priority points based on the following criteria:

- Points assigned for buses without three-point seat belts:
 - Greater than 75% = 4 points
 - 50% to 74.99% = 3 points
 - 25% to 49.99% = 1 point
 - 0 to 24.99% = 0 points
- Points assigned for buses without any seatbelts:
 - Greater than 75% = 4 points
 - 50% to 74.99% = 3 points
 - 25% to 49.99% = 1 point
 - 0 to 24.99% = 0 points
- Percentage of LEA school bus riders (home to school):
 - 75% and greater = 4 points
 - 50% to 74.99% = 3 points
 - 25 to 49.99% = 1 point
 - 0 to 24.99% = 0 points
- Daily school bus mileage per bus rider
 - 1.85 or greater miles = 4 points
 - 1.2 to 1.84 miles = 3 points
 - 0.80 to 1.1 miles = 1 point

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- 0 to 0.79 miles 0 = points
- LEA attests to receiving \$6,000 per bus and being responsible for paying for any additional costs related to retrofitting the school buses with three-point seat belts.
 - Yes = 5 points
 - No = 0 points

Step Two: School System Ranking

- Total priority points to rank order school systems = 21.
- School systems are ranked in descending order based on their total priority points.

Step Three: Funding Allocation Process

- Total available funding: \$10,000,000.
- School systems will be awarded \$6,000 per bus that does not have three-point seatbelts in rank order, until all funding is exhausted. Partial funding may occur for the final school system who is able to receive funding based upon the rank order.
- School systems will receive funding according to the number of eligible school buses reported through SB 546 with a maximum award of \$500,000 per school system. Funds will be awarded as available with priority given to those with highest points. If funds are available after the initial funding allocation, additional funds will be added to the school systems who have reached the maximum grant award of \$500,000.

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](#), Classification of Direct and Indirect Costs.

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

Direct Administrative Costs

TEA does not permit direct administrative costs for this grant program.

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 permitted, if requested, from September 1, 2026, to NOGA Begin Date.

IDC 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)

Statutorily Required Responses

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.

The following requirements are defined in the statute that authorizes this program. The applicant must comply with each of these requirements in the application to be considered for funding:

1. Must be eligible for the transportation allotment, under Texas Education Code, Section 48.151.
2. Installed three-point seat belts must comply with the safety standards established by the Department of Public Safety in accordance with Texas Education Code, Section 34.002, Texas Administrative Code, Title 37, Chapter 14, and any other applicable law.

TEA Application Required Responses

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

In addition to the statutory requirements, TEA has established the following program requirements. Applicants must address within the application how they will achieve the following:

1. School systems must have completed SB 546 cost estimate reporting in Sentinel
2. School systems can only utilize no more than \$6,000 of grant funds per bus. Aggregation of grant funds is not permissible.
3. School systems agree to participate in mandatory grant programmatic reporting
4. 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.

Statutorily or Program-Specific Assurances

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

1. The applicant assures that the application does not contain any information that would be protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) from general release to the public.
2. The applicant assures to adhere to all the Statutory and TEA Program requirements as noted in the School Bus Safety Grant Program Guidelines.
3. The applicant assures to adhere to all the Performance Measures, as noted in the School Bus Safety Grant Program Guidelines, and shall provide to TEA, upon request, any performance data necessary to assess the success of the program.
4. The applicant assures that any Electronic Information Resources (EIR) produced as part of this agreement will comply with the State of Texas Accessibility requirements as specified in 1 TAC 206, 1 TAC Chapter 213, Federal Section 508 standards, and the WCAG 2.0 AA Accessibility Guidelines.
5. The applicant acknowledges that 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.

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The program-specific assurances for this grant program can be found on the [TEA Grant Opportunities](#) and on the IDC application. Refer to Schedule PS3013 - Program Plan.

Program Elements

Performance and Evaluation Measures

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

- Number of school buses outfitted with three-point seat belts using grant funds. Including year of school bus, date of completion of three-point seat belt installation (or projected date of completion), and whether a contractor was utilized or not.
 - Provide clarification about retrofitting to show how many buses previously had zero seat belts and how many buses had two-point seat belts.
- Number of school buses remaining without three-point seat belts.
- Attestation that the seat belts installed comply with DPS regulations and any other applicable laws.
- Retrofitting cost per bus with an accompanying installation invoice.

Limits on Contracted Evaluators

Applicants should make every effort to ensure that contracted evaluators be independent and objective.

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

- Payroll costs associated with retrofitting school buses with three-point seat belts
- Professional and contracted services associated with retrofitting school buses with three-point seat belts
- Consumable and durable supplies and materials associated with retrofitting school buses with three-point seat belts
- Capital outlay associated with retrofitting school buses with three-point seat belts

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:

- Procurement (purchase or contracted service) of school buses
- Costs associated with the installation of two-point seat belts or lap belts
- Debt services (lease liabilities for terms greater than 12 months) — unallowable costs include:
- Subscription-based Information Technology Arrangement (SBITA) — Principal Costs (6514)
- Subscription-based Information Technology Arrangement (SBITA) — Interest Costs (6526)
- 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)
- Audit services for state-funded grants
- Interest on Debt Costs (6523)
- Travel costs (out-of-state and in-state) are unallowable activity/use of funds
- Costs for travel for students to conferences may not be funded under the grant program (does not include field trips)
- Educational field trips may not be funded under the grant program
- Stipends for non-employees may not be funded under the grant program

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- Non-employee costs for conferences may not be funded under the grant program
- Travel costs for officials such as executive director, superintendent, or board members may not be funded under the grant program
- The cost of membership in any civic or community organization may not be funded under the grant program
- Conferences may not be hosted or sponsored under the grant program
- An advisory council may not be funded under the grant program
- Any activity not specified above in the Allowable Activities and Use of Funds section

Expenditure Reporting (ER)

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), Cash Management, as well as the [Expenditure Reporting](#) webpage.

The grant program will be funded by reimbursement once the NOGA has been issued and the grantee submits payment (drawdown) requests through the Expenditure Reporting (ER) system. The grantee is required to request payment regularly, at minimum quarterly, for allowable expenditures as grant program requirements are carried out. However, it is best practice to request funds monthly to support program implementation.

Note: Not requesting payments at least quarterly may cause noncompliance findings on improper program implementation in TEA subrecipient monitoring.

Attachments

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

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.

Adding Attachments

The instructions in the following sections describe how to attach files to an eGrants application, if applicable.

General Instructions

The size of each attachment cannot exceed 10MB. If you have a larger file, use a different scanning setting or zip the file to make it take up less space.

The only supported browser is Google Chrome. If you are using another browser, please change to Google Chrome before attaching files.

Documents only need to be attached once. Do not attach duplicate documents when completing an amendment. Remove an existing attached document prior to attaching a new version.

Naming Attachments

Name the files you are going to attach with no spaces (for example, 501C3letter.doc or 5013C_letter.doc) and no special characters. Use a meaningful name that identifies the specific document.

Make sure that each attachment has a valid extension (.pdf, .doc, .rtf, .xls, .bmp, .txt, .docx, .xlsx).

Note that attachments with very long names may not be able to be uploaded. If you have difficulty, try renaming the file and starting over.

Scanning Documents

If a document must be scanned to create an electronic copy, use the following hints to ensure that the document size is as small as possible:

- Use an OCR or DPI setting of 200 DPI.
- Scanned files must be in PDF format.

Zippping Files

If your files are too large, add them to a zip file to save space (download a free version of [WinZip](#) and find instructions on creating zip files).

Attaching Files to an eGrants Application

1. Ensure that the document is saved on your computer, using the naming instructions above.
2. On the grant application's Table of Contents page, select Attach File.
3. Select the appropriate radio button for a TEA Defined Attachment or an Optional Attachment.
4. Select the Browse button. A standard Windows browser appears. Find the file.
5. Select Attach.
6. Confirm the document title appears under Documents Submitted in This Version; refresh the page if necessary. If the attachment does not appear, you may have to rename your document with a shorter name and start over.
7. Repeat this process to attach all your documents.