Request for Application

Program Guidelines

2026-2027 ESC Texas Strategic Leadership (TSL) Funding Grant

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Texas Education Agency

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Introduction to the Program Guidelines

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) administers federal[1] and state grant awards to its subgrantees[2] 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 the grantee review all cross-referenced sections when preparing the application.

Errata Notices

See the General and Fiscal Guidelines, Errata Notices.

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[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.

Contact for Clarifying Information

Grant Program Contact

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Additional Program Contact

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Funding Contact

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Federal and/or State Appropriations

The following is provided in compliance with federal appropriations acts:

Category	Amount
Total funds available for this project	**$5,200,000**
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	$5,200,000

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 Texas Strategic Leadership program is for superintendents and their leadership teams seeking deeper supports with:

- Turn strategic plan into consistent actions that are monitored for quality and impact
- Use recurring Performance Management routines to analyze implementation and student outcome data and adjust actions
- Ensure district systems, resources, and leadership actions work together to support strategic priorities
- Foster a culture of accountability where leaders use data to continuously improve systems and student outcomes
- Forward movement on stakeholder alignment and change management

Districts that are invited to participate in Texas Strategic Leadership, after successfully applying, will receive tailored support from their ESC's Texas Strategic Leadership Lead Coach and Performance Management and Data Specialist, to operationalize performance management through consistent routines and structures. The TSL Team will support the superintendent, their leadership team, and their board with:

1. Facilitating Ongoing Performance Management Routines
2. Establish consistent district Performance Management routines that use meaningful data to monitor implementation, evaluate progress toward strategic priorities, and drive timely leadership decisions
3. Strengthening Observation and Feedback Systems
4. Support districts in building high-quality observation and feedback systems through aligned observation tools, coaching structures, and continuous monitoring of instructional quality
5. Monitoring System Implementation and Student Outcomes

6. Help district leadership teams regularly analyze implementation and student outcome data, identify trends and root causes, and prioritize leadership actions.
7. Building Sustainable Leadership Systems
8. Develop the district's capacity to sustain continuous improvement through aligned leadership routines, clear ownership, measurable success indicators, and ongoing coaching
9. Attending Cohort-Based Learning Labs to engage in research-based performance management practices

The TSL Lead Coach role will be responsible for the executive coaching of a superintendent and their district leadership team through providing the TSL services.

The Performance Management Data Specialist will be responsible for the project management, data collection, analysis, and visualization as well as performance management necessary for coaching a district through the TSL services.

Eligible Applicants

See the General and Fiscal Guidelines, Eligibility for Funding.

All 20 regional ESCs are eligible for this grant

Eligibility List

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

Shared Services Arrangements (SSAs)

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

Shared services arrangements 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, Classification of Direct and Indirect Costs.

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

Note Regarding Grantee Determination of Grant-Funded Position Functions as Administrative or Programmatic: The grantee is responsible for making case-by-case determinations to determine whether the functions of a grant-funded position are **administrative or programmatic**, or divided between both. There may be overlap in characteristics and activities, and no single factor or combination of factors is necessarily determinative. There are no uniform federal regulations that define how to characterize costs as either direct program or direct administrative costs. However, the organization must be consistent across programs in how they charge these costs. For more information, including considerations for making a determination regarding a grant-funded position, see the Universal Errata issued by TEA on July 15, 2026.

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 permitted, if requested, from September 1, 2026, to stamp-in date.

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)
- Texas Grant Management Standards (requirements defined by the state for regional ESCs and limited other applicants)

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:

1. Grantees must provide customized executive coaching and support to current TSL superintendents through the duration of the grant
2. Grantees must complete all necessary benchmarks, tasks, key outputs, and data requirements with their TSL district to ensure districts are set up for success beyond the duration of the grant
3. Maintain the following the TSL roles with the necessary qualifications to ensure continuity of supports for the duration of the grant:
    - TSL Lead Coach(es)
        - Can be a full-time or part-time coach.
        - Salary is determined by the local policies of each individual ESC
        - Has prior experience and expertise holding a role and/or coaching at the executive leadership level
            - Ability to inform and influence superintendents and other key senior leaders in the region
    - TSL Performance Management and Data Specialist
        - Can be a full-time or part-time coach.

- Salary is determined by each individual ESC's local policies
- Has prior experience in data collection, analysis, and visualization, including the use of creating and maintaining a dashboard platform for performance management towards inputs, outputs and outcomes
- Has prior experience and expertise in project management including the ability to align and keep on track various owners towards the successful completion of key milestones aligned towards benchmarks and goals including mitigating risks, assigning tasks, and providing communication and status updates

4. The Lead Coach and Performance Management Specialist must complete the following, including but not limited to, for certification:
   - Working in partnership with TEA to strategically think through the approach for each district and continuously reflect on strengths and areas of opportunity to grow in the supports being provided directly to the TSL school systems
   - Attend all onboarding, trainings, meetings, and debriefs related to conducting program supports with the identified school systems including asynchronous review and necessary preparation
   - Attend all monthly check-ins with TEA and additional check-ins as needed and requested by TEA team for monitoring both progress of districts as well as progress towards completing certification requirements
   - Commit to completing all tasks for the duration of the grant as well as continuously attend updated training refreshers to incorporate new and/or modified aspects of codified TSL service
5. Grantees must collaborate and communicate with TEA in the time and manner requested by TEA
6. Grantees must provide support to 1 to 3 school systems in Texas Strategic Leadership.
   - Specifically, these school systems must be able to commit their superintendents and any other key school systems leaders who are needed in the process for the full duration of supports
   - These school systems must be able to participate fully for the duration of the school year and complete all necessary benchmarks, tasks, and data requirements

Texas Grant Management Standards (TxGMS)

See the TxGMS for detailed requirements. In general, the TxGMS apply to regional ESCs and limited other applicants. The TxGMS do not apply to school districts or open-enrollment charter schools.

In general, the TxGMS require state-funded grants to follow the federal Uniform Grant Guidance (UGG), 2 CFR part 200.

Program-Specific Assurances

See the General and Fiscal Guidelines, Provisions, Assurances, and Certifications.

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

- Payroll costs
- Professional and contracted services
- Consumable and durable supplies and materials
- 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)
- Capital outlay
- 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.

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 state-funded grants
- Out-of-state travel
- Travel for students to conferences
- Educational 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 council
- 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.

Performance Measures

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

1. 100% of required ESC TSL team members participate in all required TSL trainings and monthly TEA/ESC check-ins.
2. 100% of required ESC TSL team members successfully complete TSL certification requirements and EDF Overview Certification within established timelines.
3. 100% of ESC TSL teams track data on the cadence of executive coaching meetings with TSL district leadership according to TEA expectations and guidelines.
4. 100% of required grant requirements for each TSL district are complete, accurate, timely, and aligned to TEA established templates, criteria, and submission requirements.
5. 100% of ESC TSL teams facilitate and/or support the facilitation of calibration walkthroughs with each district's leadership team, including the superintendent, using required TEA processes and resources.
6. 100% of ESC TSL teams will facilitate all required Performance Management Routines with each district's Executive Performance Management Team, including the superintendent, using required TEA processes and resources.
7. 100% of ESC TSL teams ensure the required District Performance Management Routine Survey is administered following each routine and actively support completion by at least the district superintendent and other participating district leaders.
8. 100% of TSL districts utilize a system to capture, monitor, and visualize data related to classroom observation and feedback according to TEA expectations and guidelines.
9. 100% of eligible year two TSL engaged districts will meet established matriculation criteria and advance to the next year of TSL Performance Management.
10. Grantees must collect and provide data and reporting information as required by the TEA in the time and manner requested by TEA. Reports will include the metrics described in the Performance Measures section of these guidelines in the format requested by TEA.
11. Grantees must keep sufficient records to demonstrate the amount of funds expended and will provide a budget and expense report to TEA semi-annually.

Attachments

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