2025-2026 Tri-Agency Grant for Regional Conveners

Informal Discretionary Competition (IDC) Application Due 11:59 p.m. CT, January 10, 2025

Texas Education Agency®

NOGA ID

Authorizing legislation

This LOI application must be submitted via email to **competitivegrants@tea.texas.gov.**

The LOI application may be signed with a digital ID or it may be signed by hand. Both forms of signature are acceptable.

TEA must receive the application by **11:59 p.m. CT, January 10, 2025**.

Application stamp-in date and time

Grant period from **March 01, 2025-April 30, 2027**

Pre-award costs permitted from **Not Permitted**

Required Attachments

1. Excel workbook with the grant's budget schedules (linked along with this form on the TEA Grants Opportunities page)
2. TRPN Regional Convener Assurance (linked along with this form on the TEA Grants Opportunities page)

Select Focus Area & Name Which of Texas' 28 Workforce Development Areas Being Applied For

◉ **Focus Area 1**

○ **Focus Area 2**

Workforce Development Area Workforce Solutions Greater Dallas

Amendment Number

Amendment number (For amendments only; enter N/A when completing this form to apply for grant funds):

Applicant Information

Organization North Central Texas InterLink | CDN | Campus | ESC | DUNS

Address 8445 Freeport Parkway #640 | City Irving | ZIP 75063 | Vendor ID

Primary Contact Daphne Rickard Kent | Email daphne@interlink-ntx.org | Phone 817-932-5990

Secondary Contact Caitlyn Sartin | Email Caitlyn@ntc-dfw.org | Phone 972-621-0400

Certification and Incorporation

I understand that this application constitutes an offer and, if accepted by TEA or renegotiated to acceptance, will form a binding agreement. I hereby certify that the information contained in this application is, to the best of my knowledge, correct and that the organization named above has authorized me as its representative to obligate this organization in a legally binding contractual agreement. I certify that any ensuing program and activity will be conducted in accordance and compliance with all applicable federal and state laws and regulations.

I further certify my acceptance of the requirements conveyed in the following portions of the LOI application, as applicable, and that these documents are incorporated by reference as part of the LOI application and Notice of Grant Award (NOGA):

☒ LOI application, guidelines, and instructions

☒ General and application-specific Provisions and Assurances

☒ Debarment and Suspension Certification

☒ Lobbying Certification

Authorized Official Name Daphne Rickard Kent | Title InterLink President and CEO

Email daphne@interlink-ntx.org | Phone 817-932-5990

Signature Daphne Rickard Kent Digitally signed by Daphne Rickard Kent Date: 2025.01.09 18:31:59 -06'00' | Date 01/09/2025

Shared Services Arrangements

Shared services arrangements (SSAs) are not permitted for this grant.

Statutory/Program Assurances

The following assurances apply to this program. In order to meet the requirements of the program, the applicant must comply with these assurances.

Check each of the following boxes to indicate your compliance.

☒ 1. The applicant provides assurance 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 provides assurance to adhere to all the Statutory and TEA Program requirements as noted in the 2025-2026 Tri-Agency Grant for Regional Conveners Program Guidelines.

☒ 3. The applicant provides assurance to adhere to all the Performance Measures, as noted in the 2025-2026 Tri-Agency Grant for Regional Conveners 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.

☒ 6. To carry out the roles and responsibilities of a regional convener for a geographic region with boundaries identical to those of the workforce development area.

☒ 7. Identify at least one staff person, who meets the qualifications and experience of a regional convener lead as outlined in these guidelines, with adequate time allocated to the work of this grant project and who will serve as the regional convener lead.

☒ 8. Identify multiple staff at the regional convener organization to engage in the work and participate in grant activities. This includes someone in an executive leadership position who has decision-making authority on behalf of the regional convener organization.

☒ 9. To complete all grant activities and deliverables in a timely manner, as described in the description of program and performance and evaluation measures.

☒ 10. To coordinate with their assigned coach, to be provided by TEA for technical assistance, and meet with their coach frequently throughout the project, including within the first month to align on program priorities and requirements.

☒ 11. To participate and engage in statewide training and convenings during the grant period.

☒ 12. **Focus Area 1:** To convene and engage a cross-sector pathways leadership team in the strategic planning process within the first three months of the grant project.

☒ 13. **Focus Area 1:** To develop an asset map and gap analysis within six months of the grant start date under the direction and guidance of their assigned coach. In addition, the applicant will keep this landscape analysis updated throughout the grant project.

☒ 14. **Focus Area 1:** To develop, in collaboration with members of the cross-sector leadership team, a strategic plan and supporting action plans within the first 12 months of the grant project.

☐ 15. **Focus Area 2:** The applicant assures it will begin implementation of the strategic plan, including taking action on deliverables included in the two-year implementation plan.

☐ 16. **Focus Area 2:** To execute work-based learning that will address K-12 gaps and will expand upon existing work-based learning within their region.

Summary of Program

Provide an overview of the program to be implemented with grant funds. Include the overall mission and specific needs of the organization. Also include the following in your response:

a. *Current Regional Landscape* - Describe the key career and education pathway initiatives and/or programs currently underway in your WDA, including those funded by TEA, THECB, and/or TWC.

b. *Regional Convener Priorities* - What are your priorities for strategic alignment across current state, regional, and local pathways initiatives in the WDA? What would be necessary for that alignment to take place?

c. *Regional Convener Responsibilities* - Describe any current work your organization performs related to the additional functions of regional conveners. Include analysis of labor market information, convening of cross-sector teams, engagement of employers, communication across the region, and efforts to drive sustainability.

North Central Texas InterLink is a non-profit organization that provides quality workforce planning for the region and for the past 38 years has been comprised of K12, IHE, business/industry, and workforce through a dynamic advisory board of 72 members to link education and business as well as provide timely and relevant labor market data. Being located in the heart of the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex, InterLink has been a catalyst to bring together regional business and education partners from several workforce development boards, including Workforce Solutions Greater Dallas, Workforce Solutions for Tarrant County, and Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas. Because of the history of collaboration among these partners, InterLink plans to not only provide development of relevant, regional career pathways for Dallas County through Greater Dallas Workforce Solutions but also provide a connection among the other DFW workforce boards, including Tarrant County through T3 (a pathways to careers initiative), and North Central Texas. Our region believes that this strong bond among workforce, business/industry, and education will benefit the students as they select high-demand career pathways and earn dual college credit, industry credentials, and participate in quality work-based learning experiences. The overall mission of InterLink as convener for Dallas County is to identify and coordinate a cross-sector leadership team, including K12, post-secondary education, and workforce development to support the planning, monitoring, and continuous improvement of regional pathways, including the development of an asset map, gap analysis, and regional strategic plan.

a. Current Regional Landscape – InterLink and its partners collaborate to provide career and education pathway initiatives. Interlink has been active in many regional education initiatives, including serving as intermediary/convener for Texas Regional Pathways Network (TRPN), Cohorts 1-4 and ESC Region 10 TRPN initiative to build the electricity/electronics pathway in Dallas County.

b. Regional Convener Priorities – 1. Regional Alignment - InterLink will identify and coordinate a cross-sector leadership team that will include K12, post-secondary education, and workforce development to support the planning, monitoring, and continuous improvement of regional pathways, including collaborating and the development of an asset map and gap analysis. A regional strategic plan will be developed to execute high-quality pathways and workforce development initiatives. As a beginning point, InterLink will focus on Information Technology as an in-demand industry and will expand to other pathways in the region from data obtained in the regional labor market analysis that InterLink conducts each year. InterLink is led by a President/CEO, Daphne Rickard Kent, who has extensive experience in serving as intermediary/convener for Texas Regional Pathways Network and contracts with individuals who have extensive education background in the implementation of quality career and education pathways and work-based learning. 2. Regional Work-Based Learning - InterLink will plan for high-quality work-based learning that serves K12 and post-secondary and in alignment with the Tri-Agency Work-Based Learning Framework: Career Exploration – Learning About Work; Career Preparation – Learning Through Work; and Career Training – Learning at Work. 3. Regional Data - InterLink will access and organize data on current initiatives being offered in the region, including programs of study, work-based learning, industry-based certifications, and career awareness activities being conducted. 4. Regional Communications - InterLink will develop a regular meeting schedule for the steering committee and also a meeting schedule for all partners to collaborate and participate in the work. Additionally, a website will be developed to share pertinent information across the region, including partners, meeting dates and locations, agendas, minutes of meetings, and other relevant regional data. InterLink will hold a minimum of 2 trainings, one for education and one for employers on the vision for high-quality work-based learning in the region. InterLink partners with Dallas County school districts: Dallas, Allen, Anna, Cedar Hill, Coppell, DeSoto, Duncanville ISD, Grand Prairie, Irving, Melissa, Mesquite, Plano, Richardson, Rockwall, and Sunnyvale. InterLink partners with Dallas College to provide a seamless transition from K12 to post-secondary and also Workforce Solutions for Greater Dallas. These partners are key to providing a strong steering committee to assure all grant activities are carried out with fidelity.

c. Regional Convener Responsibilities – InterLink currently holds regular meetings among K12, IHEs, business/industry, and workforce to share resources, obtain up-to-date labor market data, and provide a needed linkage between education and business. InterLink conducts a thorough and customized labor market analysis of the region annually and shares that information with all LEAs, IHEs, and business/industry partners. For many LEAs in the region, InterLink is the place they go for customized labor market data and career pathway support for their district's programs of study.

Qualifications and Experience for Key Personnel

Outline the required qualifications for primary project personnel and any external consultants to be involved in the program's implementation and delivery. Include the following in your response:

a. *Organizational Capacity* - Describe your current level of involvement in key career and education pathways initiatives in your region, how current staff is involved, and anticipated staff hires (including their qualifications and experience) for this grant.

b. *Regional Alignment Experience* - Describe your organization's experience in leading strategic planning for regional career and education pathways, including collaboration with industry, K-12 education, higher education, and workforce stakeholders.

c. *Regional Convener Responsibilities (related to staff involvement)* - Include experience in engaging employers, convening cross-sector leadership, and sustaining coordinated efforts.

a. Organizational Capacity – InterLink has been involved in the Texas Regional Pathways Network (TRPN) for the past 5 years, as intermediary/convener for the NCTX Aerial Robotics Initiative (Cohorts 1-4) that was led by Fort Worth ISD as grant administrator and involved 10 LEAs, Workforce Solutions for Tarrant County, Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas, Tarrant County College, University of North Texas College of Engineering, Southern Methodist University College of Engineering, North Central Texas Council of Governments, and over 10 business/industry partners. Additionally, InterLink was a partner in the electricity/electronics pathway development with ESC Region 10 and key education (LEAs and IHEs) and industry partners in Dallas County. For the past 2 years, InterLink has been led by Daphne Rickard Kent, InterLink President and CEO, who prior to InterLink served as CTE Executive Director and grant administrator for TRPN in Fort Worth ISD for four years. Daphne Rickard Kent will serve as the grant lead. She is President and CEO and makes decisions for the organization. InterLink contracted with Dr. Linda Anderson, who served as CTE Director in Birdville ISD for 28 years, to assist as project manager for the pathways work. Dr. Anderson has served as project manager for TRPN since 2019. InterLink also plans to contract with Lisa Harrison who served as CTE Coordinator in Birdville ISD and most recently as Administrator Coach for CCMR/CTE for Education Service Center Region 11. Lisa also serves on the North Central Texas Economic Development District as Education Board member. There is tremendous capacity for carrying out the Convener responsibilities with Daphne Rickard Kent, Dr. Linda Anderson, and Lisa Harrison who all have a tremendous amount of experience in developing career pathways and business/education/workforce partnerships.

b. Regional Alignment Experience – InterLink's tagline is: "Bridging the gap between business, education, and government." The very mission and work of InterLink is in direct alignment with the Convener role. InterLink is a regional nonprofit alliance that includes secondary and post-secondary education, business, government, trade organizations, chambers of commerce, economic development organizations, and workforce boards. For 38 years, InterLink has brought together K12, IHE, business/industry, and workforce in North Central Texas with an advisory board of 72 members that links education and business in the region. InterLink was named a Texas Model Program by the Tri-Agency (Texas Education Agency, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and Texas Workforce Commission). Additionally, for the past 5 years, InterLink has led strategic planning for career and education pathways as intermediary in the Texas Regional Pathways Network (TRPN) and as a partner in TRPN pathways development with ESC Region 10 in Dallas County.

c. Regional Convener Responsibilities (related to staff involvement) - InterLink engages employers in regularly scheduled meetings in order to keep a pulse on business/industry development in the region and to keep up with current regional labor market data. InterLink, as Convener, will schedule meetings with the steering committee, including business, education (LEAs and IHEs), and workforce. A regular meeting schedule for the steering committee and also a meeting schedule for all partners to collaborate and participate in the work will be developed. This schedule will be communicated to all partners. Additionally, a website will be developed to share pertinent information across the region, including partners, meeting dates and locations, agendas and minutes of meeting, and other relevant regional data. InterLink will hold a minimum of 2 trainings, one for education and one for employers on the vision for high-quality work-based learning in the region. Because of the strong partnerships developed among business, education, and workforce, career pathway development in the region will expand beyond Information Technology which will be the immediate focus, to other pathways that are from high-demand industries in the region. This work will continue beyond the grant period.

Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

Describe the major goals/objectives of the proposed program. Detail any strategies that will be implemented to meet those goals/objectives. Include the following in your response:

a. *Regional Work-Based Learning Experience* - Using the Tri-Agency WBL Continuum, describe your experience planning, implementing, and monitoring work-based learning activities and summarize gaps in work-based learning in your region.

b. *Regional Convener Responsibilities (related to goals)* - Include specific regional goals like aligning pathways to labor market needs, engaging cross-sector teams, and improving communication and sustainability efforts.

c. *Partnerships* - Describe your partnerships with industry, postsecondary education, K-12 education, and workforce/economic development, and detail specific collaborative activities.

a. InterLink is a long-standing steward of regional work-based learning knowledge and practical experience. The leaders of the steering committee for the Tri-Agency Grant for Regional Conveners hold the proven capacity to lead this work. The team has led the creation of thriving Programs of Study in North Texas that align to high-need, high-wage career pipelines that include student work-based learning experiences in the community, creation of industry advisory boards, management of teacher externships, and extensive professional learning opportunities. Interlink has been bridging the gap between business, education, and government since 1987, including advocating for the establishment of work-based learning between LEAs and local industry. Interlink connects education, industry, and government together through meaningful engagement that brings a deeper understanding of both need and opportunity in the region, through an annual Labor Market Survey, presentations, collaborative meetings, and supporting regional Perkins Grants. Interlink has successfully managed grant deliverables and funds, modeled engaging communication with target audiences, and provided detailed information on local labor market needs and gaps.

b. The primary goal will be to develop and execute high-quality pathways through shared vision created by a gap analysis of regional assets that drive alignment to the Tri-Agency focus to bring highly skilled individuals to the high-wage, high-needs careers in our region. A website will be created that includes a landscape map. A gap analysis of determined existing assets will result in a strategic plan that includes ongoing professional learning presentations targeting both industry and education. Collaborative opportunities will be created to enhance student engagement and success.

c. The goals will be met through InterLink's collaboration with Dallas County Industry Partners, such as Texas Instruments, local education agencies such as Dallas ISD, government partners such as North Texas Council of Government, Dallas Workforce Solutions, IHE's such as Dallas College and University of Texas at Dallas, and Education Service Center Region 10. Relationships will be leveraged to improve communication and knowledge among all entities, to result in greater interaction and increased student participation in work-based learning opportunities from awareness activities to internships and apprenticeships. Convening of cross-sector collaborations will happen through existing InterLink meetings, scheduled grant meetings, the created website providing up-to-date pathway information, and presentations to increase awareness and knowledge offered to engaged parties aligned to all levels of this work. InterLink has invested in work-based learning across the continuum of learning about work, learning through work, and learning at work in a way that informs students about career opportunities, provides them with hands-on experience that directly applies to their careers of choice, and supports their continued education and advancement through learn-and-earn models such as internship and apprenticeship.

Performance and Evaluation Measures

Describe the performance measures identified for this program that are related to student outcomes and consistent with the program's purpose. Include tools and processes that will be used to ensure effectiveness, such as annual labor market needs assessments and tracking project outcomes. Include the following in your response:

a. *Regional Data Experience* - How do you monitor progress and measure the quality of career and education pathway programs or initiatives? Include metrics or key performance indicators (KPIs) to assess the strength of your region's pathways.

b. *Regional Convener Responsibilities (related to performance)* - Focus on ensuring career pathways align with in-demand industries and convening cross-sector leadership teams.

c. *Anticipated Project and Student Outcomes* - Outline the anticipated outcomes for each grant activity and the projected student outcomes. Include the projected number of students from each partner school district that will participate in the activities related to this grant activity.

a. Performance will be tracked and evaluated using a multitude of key performance indicators to determine success and further expansion of the work in the region. The KPI's will be financially oriented through tracking of grant spending; process oriented through measuring completion of the following targets, calendared meetings, website creation, landscape map creation, gap analysis completion, creation and execution of professional learning, published strategic plan, and customer-focused through surveys and interviews.

b. The formed steering committee will work using collaborations that will provide local asset information that will be utilized in the website creation and a published asset map. This will drive the gap analysis which will determine our future focus of activities to result in greater student work-based learning opportunities and enhanced pipeline to high-wage, high-need careers. High-need, high-wage careers will be examined yearly and re-evaluated to ensure ongoing relevance in the region. Focus 1 grant baselines will be established through data gathering and evaluation. This will be both industry and education facing to inform gaps and strategically plan for mitigation. This will allow all stakeholders to create a shared regional vision to publish on the website and address needs through targeted engagements created by the steering committee to align work-based learning opportunities to the Tri-Agency Work-Based Learning Framework.

c. The strategic plan will include building a Dallas County Career Investigation lesson aligned to local labor market information that will be distributed to Dallas County School districts to utilize with students. The student population in Dallas County ISDs is 426,471, with a target of 10 % of the students utilizing middle school career exploration material that aligns to high-need/high-wage careers and Programs of Study aligned to careers. An emphasis will be placed on the benefits of work-based learning to career success. Access to the created website that includes an asset map will be public and targeted to teacher and student access, with a goal of 1,000 site visits by March 31, 2029. The created Strategic Plan will be shared with all participating Local Education Agencies. Dallas County consists of the following ISDs; Anna, Carrollton-Farmers Branch ISD, Cedar Hill ISD, Coppell ISD, Dallas ISD, DeSoto ISD, Duncanville ISD, Garland ISD, Grand Prairie ISD, Highland Park ISD, Irving ISD, Lancaster ISD, Mesquite ISD, Richardson ISD, and Sunnyvale ISD.

Budget Narrative

Describe how the proposed budget will meet the program's needs and goals, including staffing, project design, and resources needed to support the grant's implementation. Include the following in your response:

a. *Funding Allocations and Justification* - Provide justification for the specific funding allocations in the proposed budget and describe how each item will support the team's needs.

b. *Grant Activities Support* - Detail how the specific funding allocations will support the grant activities in each of the domains: Regional Alignment, Regional Work-Based Learning, Regional Data, and Regional Communications.

c. *Coordinated Funding Strategies* - Outline the coordinated funding strategies the team will use to incorporate other funding sources to support the implementation and future sustainability of this project.

The proposed budget is developed to meet the needs of the Convener for Greater Dallas Workforce Solutions in order to develop high-quality career pathways through a shared vision created by a gap analysis of regional assets that drive alignment to the Tri-Agency focus to bring highly skilled individuals to the high-wage, high-needs careers in our region. A website will be created that includes a landscape map. A gap analysis of determined existing assets will result in a strategic plan that includes ongoing professional learning presentations targeting both industry and education. Collaborative opportunities will be created to enhance student engagement and success.

a. InterLink proposes $70,000 budgeted for a Program Director in 6100 to assure that all goals for the Convener are met, including a gap analysis of regional assets that will result in a strategic plan. These funds will assure that all partners meet regularly and develop career pathways in alignment with the labor market data for the region, beginning with Information Technology pathway. The budget includes $164,500 in contracted services to include $100,000 to hire two part-time project managers who have decades of experience in developing career pathways, bringing together partners (education, business, and workforce) to collaborate and provide dual credit, work-based learning, and industry credentials for students. The balance of the 6200 includes $30,000 to develop a regional dashboard, and $14,500 to develop and maintain a website and to develop marketing materials. There is also $20,000 for other expenses related to contracted services. The budget includes $2,000 in 6300 for supplies and materials needed to carry out the goals of the grant. The budget includes $55,000 in 6400, which includes $30,000 for any out-of-state travel for members of the steering committee that is offered and approved through the grant, as well as $20,000 for conferences/convenings that are required for the grant and $5,000 budgeted for other expenses in 6400 related to the grant. There is 2.3% in indirect costs, $8,500 that brings the total for the project to $300,000.

b. Grant Activities Support - The steering committee will work collaboratively with partners to assure Regional Alignment by holding regularly scheduled meetings and communicating through the website that will be developed. Labor Market data for the region will be shared regularly to align with the career pathways that are high demand for the region. Regional Work-Based Learning will occur from active participation of business/industry partners that are aligned to the high-wage, high-need career pathways in the region. Information Technology is a priority pathway that will be the first career pathway that will be addressed, including Work-Based Learning and dual credit opportunities. Other career pathways will be developed as the steering committee meets and collaborates related to regional needs. Regional data will be shared at regularly scheduled meetings through the collaboration with workforce partners and the labor market analysis that InterLink conducts annually. Regional communications will occur from the website which will share labor market information, meeting dates, partner participation, activities of the region, work-based learning opportunities, and dual credit opportunities. Also, regular communication will occur through the steering committee and partner meetings that will be held throughout the grant period.

c. Coordinated Funding Strategies - InterLink will serve as Convener of Dallas County but will also provide support to the development of relevant career pathways for the other workforce boards in the region including Tarrant County through T3 (a pathways to careers initiative), and North Central Texas. Our region believes that this strong bond among workforce, business/industry, and education will benefit the students as they select high-demand career pathways and earn dual college credit, industry credentials, and participate in quality work-based learning experiences provided by business/industry partners. T3 and North Central Texas will share funding with InterLink to assure that partnerships and relevant career pathways occur for the entire region. Through this regional collaboration, project implementation and sustainability will be assured.

CDN | Vendor ID | Amendment #

Appendix I: Amendment Description and Purpose (leave this section blank when completing the initial application for funding)

An amendment must be submitted when the program plan or budget is altered for the reasons described in the "When to Amend the Application" document posted on the Administering a Grant page. The following are required to be submitted for an amendment: (1) Page 1 of the application with updated contact information and current authorized official's signature and date, (2) Appendix I with changes identified and described, (3) all updated sections of the application or budget affected by the changes identified below, and, if applicable, (4) Amended Budget Request. Amendment Instructions with more details can be found on the last tab of the budget template.

You may duplicate this page

Amended Section	Reason for Amendment