

LETTER OF INTEREST (LOI)
PROGRAM GUIDELINES:
2021–2022
SSI Community
Partnerships Planning
Grant- Cohort 3 Year 1

LOI Application Due Date

11:59 p.m. Central Time, August 24, 2021

Program Authority

Authorized by the General Appropriations Act, Article III, Rider 42, 87th Texas Legislature

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INTRODUCTION

The Texas Education Agency (TEA), as the pass-through entity¹, is the grantee² from the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) and TEA awards subgrants to non-federal entities³ such as local educational agencies (LEAs), including school districts, open-enrollment charter schools, and education service centers, and to a lesser degree institutions of higher education (IHEs), and nonprofit organizations (NPOs) who are the agency's subgrantees⁴. These guidelines apply to all subgrantees of TEA, regardless of whether referenced herein as subgrantee or grantee. For purposes of this document, TEA may use the terms grantee and subgrantee synonymously for its subrecipients.

This document MUST be used in conjunction with the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#) and the specific program instructions. The Adobe Acrobat Standard Application System (SAS) consists of all forms to be completed for the applicant to be eligible for funding. 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 Letter of Interest (LOI) Guidelines, cross-references are given to applicable sections of the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#). **It is critical that you review all referenced sections of the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#) when preparing your application.**

¹ Pass-through entity is defined as a non-Federal entity that provides a subaward to a subrecipient to carry out part of a federal program. (2 CFR 200.74)

² 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. (34 CFR 77)

³ Non-federal entity is defined as a state, local government, Indian tribe, institution of higher education, or nonprofit organization that carries out a federal award as a recipient or subrecipient. (2 CFR 200.69)

⁴ Subgrantee is defined by TEA to be the same as a subrecipient which is defined as a non-federal entity that receives a subaward from a pass-through entity to carry out part of a federal program; but does not include an individual that is a beneficiary of such program. (2 CFR 200.93) Subgrantee is defined in 34 CFR 77 as the legal entity to which a subgrant is awarded and that is accountable to the grantee for the use of the funds provided.

OVERVIEW OF LOI PROCESS

The following steps provide a high-level overview of the process for responding to a letter of interest (LOI), including submitting an LOI application, and being selected for funding:

1. TEA publishes LOI application and supporting documents on the [TEA Grant Opportunities](#) webpage.
2. Eligible applicants submit LOI application, and any required attachments to TEA by the specified deadline.
3. LOI applications reviewed and scored. Note: The highest scoring applicants may be required to attend an oral interview or respond to questions regarding their LOI application.
4. TEA announces applicants selected for funding on the TEA [Grants Awarded Data](#) webpage.
5. *For LOI applicants selected for funding, the LOI application will serve as the grant application. This eliminates the need for selected applicants to submit a separate grant application.*
6. TEA staff conducts budget negotiations on the LOI application.
7. Notice of Grant Award (NOGA) issued upon successful completion of the negotiation process.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND/OR STATE APPROPRIATIONS

The following is provided in compliance with the U.S. Department of Education Appropriations Act:

| Category | Amount |
|---|-------------|
| Total funds available for this project | \$1,200,000 |
| 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 | \$1,200,000 |

Due to current conditions, the amount available to award may change in response to budget changes that the State may make in final legislation. The Notice of Grant Awards may need to be adjusted to reflect this difference.

APPLICANT ASSISTANCE

The following types of assistance are available to applicants for this grant program.

Contact for Clarifying Information

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), *TEA Contacts*.

The following TEA staff member should be contacted with questions about the LOI:
Harold Wright, State Director of Community and University Partnerships Educator Support

Harold.Wright@tea.texas.gov

Phone: (512) 463-9635

Website: [Student Success Initiative/Community Partnerships](#)

Errata Notices

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

LOI TIMELINE

Dates, except the grant ending date, may vary slightly as conditions require.

| Date | Event |
|---|---|
| July 23, 2021 | LOI available |
| August 6, 2021 | Last date to submit FAQs to TEA contact person. General and Fiscal Guidelines , Frequently Asked Questions; submit to Harold.Wright@tea.texas.gov |
| August 10, 2021 | FAQs posted to TEA Grant Opportunities page |
| August 10, 2021 | Notice of Intent to Submit a Response due to the TEA no later than 5:00 PM. Send notice to Harold.Wright@tea.texas.gov |
| August 24, 2021 | Due date for the LOI application, which may be submitted via email to competitivegrants@tea.texas.gov ; the LOI application must be received by 11:59 p.m., Central Time. See General and Fiscal Guidelines , LOI Application Due Date and Time |
| August 25, 2021– September 23, 2021 | LOI review period See General and Fiscal Guidelines , LOI Review Process |
| September 30, 2021 | Anticipated award announcement |
| November 1, 2021 | Beginning date of grant (if selected for funding) See General and Fiscal Guidelines , Grant Period |
| June 2, 2022 | Final date to submit an amendment (if selected for funding) |
| August 31, 2022 | Ending date of grant (if selected for funding) See General and Fiscal Guidelines , Grant Period |

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

LOI AT A GLANCE

This section provides fundamental information pertinent to the grant program.

Authorizing Legislation

This LOI is authorized by the General Appropriations Act, Article III, Rider 42, 87th Texas Legislature.

Where to Submit the LOI Application

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#): *Where to Submit the LOI Application*

Submission Requirements

See the Submission Requirements for Competitive Grants section of the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#).

Note: TEA requires applications to be emailed. Multiple applications per applicant must be submitted in separate emails.

Purpose of Program

The purpose of this program is to support significant improvements in educational and developmental outcomes for children and youth who live in distressed communities by providing access to great schools and creating strong partnerships to increase family and community support that will prepare students to receive an excellent education from early learning and progressing to college and a career.

Eligible Applicants

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), *Eligibility To Apply for LOIs*.

The eligible school districts serve a student population with at least 85% who are classified as economically disadvantaged. All LEAs, regardless of size, must have at least one school in a feeder pattern of schools that has underperformed using locally developed standards or is formerly Improvement Required in state accountability. School districts must show proof of school underperformance when using locally developed standards to justify eligibility.

APPLICATION ATTACHMENTS

This section describes the required attachments that must be included with the application.

Required Attachments

See the following section of the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#): *Required Program-Related Attachments*

- **Attachment 1D**

LOI APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS AND ASSURANCES

This section describes the types of requirements that applicants must assure adherence to in order to be eligible to be considered 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 TEC §22.0834, 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](#), *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. Need for the Project**
 - a. The school district will address the academic and community needs for the project.
 - b. The school district will address its mission and how the Community Partnerships initiative will improve the quality of programming in all categories of schools in a feeder pattern.
 - c. The school district must identify campuses within the feeder pattern that are rated Improvement Required or formerly Improvement Required and show how it will utilize the five levers of the Effective Schools Framework.
- 2. Quality of the School and Community Improvement Design**
 - a. The school district will show in the project proposal how the “Community Partnerships/SSI Framework” activities and strategies will improve school and community outcomes.
 - b. The school district will describe how the leadership team will develop a system of resources and facilitate collaborative activities to identify partners to create and operationalize a shared vision of achievement for school and community improvement.
- 3. Quality of Project Resources**
 - a. The school district will show in its proposal how it will develop a system of resources and supports from birth to college that are scalable throughout the neighborhood of schools.
 - b. The district will describe in its proposal how it will effectively cooperate and coordinate partnership agencies to provide integrated wrap-around and holistic services to children and their families in the school community.
- 4. Quality of Data Management Plan**
 - a. The school district will show in its proposal how it will develop and implement robust data systems and performance management routines to ensure progress monitoring actions will drive the achievement of the predetermined outcomes of the grant.

- b. The district will show in its proposal how it will engage with partners to monitor and measure interim school progress data and conduct community outreach for each partnership organization.

5. Commitment to Program Assurances

- a. The school district will show in its proposal a commitment to fully implementing the Community Partnership initiative model they have selected and commit to using the tools and strategies to achieve school improvement and student success.
- b. The school district will show in its proposal evidence that the Community Partnerships program practices will be sustained beyond the life cycle of the grant.

Program-Specific Assurances

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

The program-specific assurances are listed on page 2 of the application.

PROGRAM ELEMENTS

This section provides detailed information about the LOI.

Communities participating in the program will be required to plan and implement the Community Partnerships framework which includes alignment of the design principles across the feeder pattern, effective schools and academic programs, family and community engagement, and intentional partnerships. Awarded vendors support grantees with planning phase and implementation phase activities to achieve a set of predetermined academic achievement outcomes defined by TEA. While these outcomes are required to be considered a successful program, schools and community partners will have the flexibility to determine how outcomes will be achieved through different partnership strategies and approaches.

LEA's participating in the Community Partnerships initiative will receive technical assistance support with four (4) main areas/stages including:

Stage 1 – Launch

- Identify Community Partnerships Design Team
- Conduct Diagnostic Assessment of Feeder Pattern using CP Diagnostic tool
- Develop the Vision for the Feeder Pattern
- Identify Priority Focus Areas, including initial identification of potential partner organizations
- Socialize the Community Partnerships vision with feeder pattern campuses and communities
- Identify baselines for all goals (SMART Goals)

Stage 2 – Plan

- Develop Implementation Plan for Pillar 1
- Develop Implementation Plan for Pillar 2
- Develop Implementation Plan for Pillar 3
- Develop Implementation Plan for Pillar 4

Stage 3 – Early Implementation

- Conduct feeder pattern and community communications activities
- Conduct initial trainings on prioritized ESF levers across all schools in the feeder pattern
- Conduct family engagement activities
- Secure and sign MOUs for all community partners
- Develop continuous improvement cycle to be used in Stage 4
- Conduct End of Year Reflection

Stage 4 – Full Implementation and Continuous Improvement

- Full implementation of Pillar 1
- Full implementation of Pillar 2
- Full implementation of Pillar 3
- Full implementation of Pillar 4
- Conduct Continuous Improvement Cycle 1, 2
- Conduct End of Year Reflection

Description of Program

This program will support significant improvements in educational and developmental outcomes for children and youth who live in struggling communities by providing access to great schools and access to a system of high-quality community, academic, and government resources from birth through college and a career.

Selected grantee school districts and communities will be required to complete implementation plans and implementation activities during each year of the grant to demonstrate progress towards outcomes. These implementation plans and implementation activities will be evaluated by TEA, or a TEA approved vendor, prior to the end of each grant year. TEA will work with each district to determine the most appropriate vendor services needed by the district based on needs of the school district and improved readiness levels for implementation planning and implementation execution of the Community Partnerships initiative.

Grantees will contract and work directly with the vendor to outline the statement of work that meets their specific needs. The school district project manager and the vendor representative will report planning and implementation activities progress to TEA every two weeks using a fidelity of implementation tracker. The schools will use this tool to monitor and evaluate the impact of the wrap around services that are provided by the community partners.

For the Planning Grants of the Community Partnerships Initiative, each grantee will be **required to work with the TEA appointed vendor to support the planning and implementation activities**. Planning grantees will have limited discretion over which activities vendors support, based on the specific needs of their community.

Supplement, Not Supplant

For supplement, not supplant guidance, see the Supplement, Not Supplant Handbook on the Grants Administration Division's [Administering a Grant](#) page.

The supplement not supplant provision **does not apply**.

PERFORMANCE AND EVALUATION MEASURES

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

- Campus performance
 - After two years of implementation, all feeder pattern campuses will be A or B rated OR will have improved two letter grades (ex. From F to C)
- Partnership utilization
 - # of MOU's signed by the partner organization
 - % of Partners supportive of the overall vision
 - % of Partners satisfied with technical assistance support
- Student outcomes
 - % of kindergartners that are kinder-ready increases by 10% over baseline
 - % of 3rd graders reading on/above grade level on STAAR increased by 10% over baseline
 - % of 8th graders do math on/above grade level on STAAR will increase by 10% over baseline
 - % of high school seniors graduating on time increased by 10% over baseline
 - % of HS seniors passing at least three EOCs increased by 10% over baseline
 - % of HS seniors with a post-secondary plan increases by 10% over baseline

Limits on Contracted Evaluators

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

APPLICATION FUNDING

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

It is anticipated that approximately 5 districts will be awarded amounts ranging from \$200,000 to \$300,000.

Selection of Applicants for Funding

Applicants will be selected in rank order.

Cost Share or Matching Requirement

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

TEA requires a 20% cost match for 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 to no more than 15% of the total award.

Indirect Costs

For this state-funded grant, the grantee may claim a maximum for indirect costs equal to **the lesser** of its current, approved unrestricted indirect cost rate or 15%.

To calculate the maximum indirect costs that can be claimed for a grant, complete the [Maximum Indirect Costs Worksheet](#), posted on the Administering a Grant page, under the Handbooks and Other Guidance section.

Pre-Award Costs

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

Pre-award costs **are not** permitted for this grant program.

Activities and Use of Funds

See the [Administering a Grant](#) page for general guidance on allowable activities and use of funds.

Allowable activities and use of funds may include but are not limited to the following:

Field Trips

Field trips **may be** funded under the grant program. Only the following type of field trip is allowable:

- College and University visits

Field Trips will require a written justification form to be maintained locally. The justification forms should be emailed to the Program Manager for approval. To access the Field Trips Justification form, refer to the [Administering a Grant page](#).

Advisory Council

An advisory council **may be** funded under the grant program. Only the following types of advisory councils are allowable:

- The advisory council for the Community Partnerships Initiative shall be based on the Site-Based Decision-Making policies and practices of the school district and shall include the community partners as advisory council members as authorized by the campus principal.

Out-of-State Travel

Out-of-state travel costs **may be** funded under this grant program. Out-of-state travel costs should be minimal. Travel costs are allowable if 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.

Out-of-State Travel will require a written justification form to be maintained locally and made available to TEA upon request. To access the Out-of-State Travel Justification form, refer to the [Administering a Grant page](#).

Travel Costs for Officials such as Executive Director, Superintendent, or Board Members

Travel costs for officials such as the executive director, superintendent, or board members **may be** funded under the grant program. Only the following travel costs are allowable for these positions:

- Exemplar site visits to model schools

General Unallowable Activities and Use of Funds

In general, refer to the Budgeting Cost Guidance Handbook on the [Administering a Grant](#) page for unallowable costs.

Cost of Membership in Any Civic or Community Organization

The cost of membership in any civic or community organization **may not** be funded under this grant program.

Hosting or Sponsoring of Conferences

Hosting or sponsoring conferences **may not** be funded under this grant program.

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

- **Debt service (lease-purchase)**
- **Audit services**

LOI SCORING AND REVIEW

This section provides information on the scoring and review of LOI applications.

LOI Review and Funding Criteria

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), *LOI Review Criteria*.

Proposals will be selected based on the ability of each Proposer to carry out all the requirements contained in the Letter of Interest. The following diagram shows the scoring criteria and associated points that will be used to review responses to the Letter of Interest:

| Item | Community Partnerships Grant Scoring Criteria | Possible Points |
|------|--|-----------------|
| 1 | Need for the Project | 50 |
| 2 | Quality of the School and Community Improvement Design | 50 |
| 3 | Quality of Project Resources | 30 |
| 4 | Quality of Management Plan | 20 |
| 5 | Commitment to Program Assurances | 30 |
| | Total | 180 |

Priorities for Funding

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), *LOI Priorities for Funding*.

There are no priority points included with this grant.

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