



# Texas Education Agency (TEA) Program Guidelines for Request for Application (RFA) to Participate in the Texas High Performance Schools Consortium Statutory Authority: Texas Education Code (TEC) §7.0561

## Program Purpose

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Created by Senate Bill 1557, 82<sup>nd</sup> Texas Legislature (2011), the purpose of the Texas High Performance Schools Consortium (“Consortium”) is to inform the governor, legislature, and commissioner of education (“commissioner”) concerning methods for transforming public schools in Texas through the development of innovative, next-generation learning standards, assessment, and accountability systems. The commissioner is authorized to select up to 20 districts and open-enrollment charter schools, representing a range of district types, sizes, and diverse student populations, to comprise the Consortium.

The commissioner, in collaboration with the Consortium, is required to develop and submit to the legislature and governor, a legislative proposal for a next-generation standards, assessment, and accountability system designed to effectively capture and enhance student learning. The purpose of this Request for Application (RFA) is to determine which eligible districts and open-enrollment charter schools are most qualified to serve as members of the Consortium and participate in the development of this legislative proposal.

The Consortium will address four principles:

- (1) *Digital learning*—Engagement of students in digital learning, including, but not limited to, engagement through the use of electronic textbooks and instructional materials adopted under the Texas Education Code (TEC), Chapter 31, Subchapters B and B-1, and courses offered through the state virtual school network under the TEC, Subchapter 30A;
- (2) *Learning standards*—Standards that a student must master to be successful in a competitive postsecondary environment including standards approved in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), high-priority learning standards, and other high-importance standards identified by the Consortium;
- (3) *Multiple assessments*—Various methods of determining student progress capable of being used to inform students, parents, school districts, and open-enrollment charter schools, on an ongoing basis, concerning the extent to which learning is occurring and the actions Consortium participants are taking to improve learning; and
- (4) *Local control*—Ways in which reliance on local input and decision-making enable communities and parents to be involved in the important decisions regarding the education of their children.

Consortium participants will assist the commissioner in the development of reports concerning the recommendations, performance, and progress of the Consortium to the governor and the legislature not later than December 1, 2012, and not later than December 1, 2014.

The 2012 legislative report must include the following:

- Recommendations by the commissioner concerning legislative authorization for the commissioner to waive prohibitions, requirements, or restrictions affecting Consortium participants' ability to participate in the proposed plan; and
- A plan for an effective and efficient accountability system for Consortium participants that balances academic excellence and local values to inspire learning. The plan may incorporate use of a stratified random sampling of students or other objective methodology to hold Consortium participants accountable while attempting to reduce the number of state assessment instruments that are required to be administered to students.

## **Consortium Composition**

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The commissioner may select no more than 20 school districts, including open-enrollment charter schools, to participate in the Consortium. In order to ensure diverse representation and participation from high performance schools, the commissioner will consider district type, size, and student demographics [using the most recent available data in the TEA's Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS)], as well as the quality of the proposal submitted by the applying district.

### *District Type*

The commissioner will select at least one district in each of the following district type categories as described in TEA's District Type Data for 2009-10:

- (1) Urban, as represented by categories titled Major Urban and Other Central City;
- (2) Suburban, as represented by categories titled Major Suburban and Other Central City Suburban;
- (3) Non-metropolitan, as represented by categories titled Independent Town, Non-Metropolitan: Fast-Growing, and Non-Metropolitan: Stable; and
- (4) Rural, as represented by the category titled Rural.

### *District Size*

The commissioner will select at least one district in each of the following categories:

- (1) Large district, as characterized by a student population of 10,000 or more students;
- (2) Mid-size district, as characterized by a student population between 1,000 and 9,999; and
- (3) Small district, as characterized by a student population of 999 or fewer.

### *Student Demographics*

The commissioner will select districts whose student demographics, when aggregated with other Consortium participants, will result in a diverse student population that is representative of the state's overall public school student population in the following categories:

- (1) Ethnicity and race;
- (2) Economically disadvantaged;
- (3) English language learners;
- (4) Students identified to receive special education services; and
- (5) Students identified as gifted and talented.

## **Eligibility for Participation**

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To be eligible to apply for participation in the Consortium, the following criteria must be met, as applicable:

- A school district and its participating campus(es) must not have been awarded the lowest performance rating under the most recent state accountability system. (For the purposes of the 2012 selection competition, a participating school district and its participating campuses must have received a rating of Academically Acceptable, Recognized, or Exemplary in the 2010-11 state accountability system.)
- Either a school district or its participating campus(es) must have received either national, statewide, or regional public acknowledgement, from an organization relying on expertise in the field of education, for district-wide or campus-wide excellence in academic performance or innovative practices in one of the areas described by the Consortium principles.
- An open-enrollment charter school must have been awarded an Exemplary or the highest performance rating as its most recent rating under the state academic accountability system.
- A school district and an open-enrollment charter school must be in compliance with the TEA audit requirements determined under TEC §109.41.
- A school district and an open-enrollment charter school shall also meet other criteria determined by the commissioner and specified in this RFA.

Because the number of students enrolled in campuses participating in the Consortium is limited to no more than five percent of the total number of students enrolled in Texas public schools according to the most recent enrollment data available in PEIMS (approximately 249,000 students), the commissioner may require a school district to adjust the number of campuses designated in the school district's application as a condition for participation in the Consortium.

Applicants are also required to submit an application fee and, if selected, will be required to pay a participation fee. For more information, see *Consortium Participation Fees and District-Level Funding* on page 6 of these guidelines.

## **Program Action Plan Components**

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In addition to identifying the district's characteristics, applicants must provide a written program action plan addressing the requirements listed below.

### *Executive Summary*

The program plan must include a brief, one-page overview of the application. The executive summary may be single spaced.

### *Program Narrative*

The program narrative is designed to demonstrate the applicant district's qualifications to participate in the Consortium.

At a minimum, the program narrative must describe:

- 1) The strength of the applicant's experience related to the Consortium mission, including:
  - a) Description of the applicant's past or current experience with and success in addressing the four Consortium principles of digital learning, high-priority learning standards, multiple assessments, and local control;
  - b) Description of the applicant's future plans to address the four Consortium principles of digital learning, high-priority learning standards, multiple assessments, and local control;

- c) Description of the public acknowledgment: either national, statewide, or regional; received by the applying district or its participating campus(es), from an organization relying on expertise in the field of education, for district-wide or campus-wide excellence in academic performance or innovative practices in one of the areas described by the Consortium principles, as required to be eligible to participate;
  - d) Description of the applicant's experience in collaborating with other districts and/or the state in designing and implementing innovative initiatives; and
  - e) Description of any assessment(s) currently used or planned to be used by the district or recommended for consideration by the Consortium to measure the quality of learning, including evidence of the accuracy of such assessment(s), as well as methodology and metrics employed.
- 2) The quality of the proposed action plan, including:
- a) Description of 2-3 research-based recommendations for consideration by the Consortium for innovation in each of the following areas: 1) next-generation learning standards, 2) assessments, and 3) accountability systems (6-9 total recommendations);
  - b) Detailed description of the curricular goals (i.e. measurable learning outcomes expected as a result of student participation in instruction covering a specific portion of the curriculum) that the applicant is recommending the Consortium consider for inclusion in its legislative proposal; and
  - c) Description of any waiver(s) for a prohibition, requirement, or restriction that the applicant is recommending the Consortium consider for inclusion in the legislative proposal.
- 3) The quality of the project management, including:
- a) Identification of names, titles, and qualifications of individuals who will be working on the Consortium project, including the staff person who will serve as the district's coordinator and contact for Consortium participation; and
  - b) Description of how stakeholders (i.e. teachers, parents, students, and community members) have been and will be involved with the planning and implementation of the project.
- 4) The adequacy of resources committed to the project, including:
- a) Description of how resources will be provided to support teachers in improving student learning and further the work of the Consortium, such as materials, release time, training, and extra-duty pay; and
  - b) Description of plans to seek gifts, grants, or donations from any source, including a private or government entity, in order to enhance the work of the district's participation in the Consortium.

NOTE: Program narrative requirements are further addressed under Application Process and Selection Criteria.

*Format*

The narrative components do not have a pre-determined format; however, the executive summary and program narrative should adhere to the following guidelines:

- Font for the body of the narrative and the executive summary should be 10-point or larger (Arial or Verdana). Charts, graphs, captions, and footnotes may use 9-point font and be double-spaced.

- The executive summary is limited to one (1) page, single-spaced (front side only).
- The program narrative may not exceed thirty (30) double-spaced pages (front side only).

The executive summary and the program narrative must be submitted as two separate files in the electronic submission. Parts 1-3 and the program narrative should be saved in \*.doc or \*.docx; attachments may be saved in \*.pdf.

### **Consortium Reporting**

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Consortium participants may be required to submit information or reports regarding Consortium-related activities in a time and manner determined by the commissioner.

## Application Process and Selection Criteria

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### Application Timeline

TIMELINE	
DATE	EVENT
April 27, 2012	Texas High Performance Schools Consortium application available
June 4, 2012	Applicants' Conference will be held via webinar at 2p.m. at <a href="https://www2.gotomeeting.com/register/807443554">https://www2.gotomeeting.com/register/807443554</a>
June 7, 2012	Last date to submit FAQs to TEA contact person
June 11, 2011	FAQs published on Consortium website
June 29, 2012	Applications due. Completed applications must be <u>received at TEA no later than 5:00 p.m. June 29, 2012</u> in order to be considered for participation.
August	Districts or charters submitting applications by June 29, 2012 will be notified in writing of either selection or non-selection as a Consortium participant.

To be considered complete, an application must be received by the due date and include the following components:

- One complete hard copy of the application, including:
  - Part 1 with original signature;
  - Parts 2 and 3;
  - Executive Summary;
  - Program Narrative;
  - Commitment Letter with appropriate original signatures; and
  - Proof of Financial Stability.
- An electronic copy of the complete application in Word or PDF submitted on a CD or unencrypted USB drive.
- Application fee.

Each applicant district should submit no more than one application.

### Selection Criteria

TEA will consider the following criteria during the evaluation of program proposals:

1. Strength of District and Selected Campus Experience (40)
  - a. Extent to which the district and selected campuses have demonstrated experience with the Consortium's principles;
  - b. Quality of the district's plan to enhance the four Consortium principles;
  - c. Quality of the national, statewide, or regional public acknowledgment received for excellence in academic performance or innovative practices in one of the Consortium principals;
  - d. Extent to which the district has collaborated with other entities in implementing innovative models; and

- e. Quality and accuracy of any assessments, other than STAAR, currently used, planned to be used, or recommended to the Consortium to measure student learning.
2. Quality of Proposal (25)
    - a. Quality of applicant's recommendations, including the extent to which the applicant's recommendations reflect up-to-date research and the replication of effective practices;
    - b. Quality of curricular goals recommended; and
    - c. Quality of rationale for proposed waiver(s).
  3. Quality of Management Component (20)
    - a. The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the Consortium coordinator and other key personnel; and
    - b. Extent to which external individuals or groups, including teachers, parents, students, and community and business members, will be involved in a meaningful way in the planning and/or implementation of the project.
  4. Adequacy of Resources (5)
    - a. Quality of the plan describing how resources will be provided to support teachers in improving student learning and further the work of the Consortium, such as materials, release time, training, and extra-duty pay; and
    - b. Extent to which the district will seek gifts, grants, or donations from any source, including a private or government entity, in order to enhance the work of the Consortium.
  5. Participant Diversity (10)
    - a. Extent to which applicant contributes to Consortium diversity with respect to district type;
    - b. Extent to which applicant contributes to Consortium diversity with respect to district size;
    - c. Extent to which applicant contributes to Consortium diversity with respect to demographic composition; and
    - d. Extent to which applicant contributes to Consortium student enrollment.

Each applicant will be notified in writing of their approval or denial of Consortium participation.

#### *Consortium Participation Fees and District-Level Funding*

Each district will be required to submit an application fee of \$500 with the completed application in the form of a check made payable to the Texas Education Agency (memo: Texas High Performance Schools Consortium). The district will submit payment by mail with the signed cover letter to:

Texas High Performance Schools Consortium Manager  
TEA, Federal and State Education Policy  
1701 North Congress, 3-121  
Austin, TX 78701

Applications submitted without the application fee will be considered incomplete.

TEA will charge a participation fee of at least \$2,500 annually and not to exceed \$10,000 annually to each school district selected to participate in the Consortium. The fee may be adjusted proportionate to the number of students enrolled in campuses the district has designated to participate in the Consortium. TEA will inform a participating district of its annual fee and the schedule for submission of the fee in the selection notification packet. The participation fee will support TEA program coordination responsibilities.

For the purposes of implementing this program, a school district participating in the Consortium may accept gifts, grants, or donations from any source, including a private entity or government entity.

**Appendix 1 – TEA Proposed Rules**  
**Chapter 102. Educational Programs, Subchapter II. Commissioner’s Rules**  
**Concerning Texas High Performance Schools Consortium**

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**§102.1201. Texas High Performance Schools Consortium.**

- (a) Definitions. The following words and terms, when used in this section, shall have the following meanings, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise.
- (1) Consortium--A group of school districts selected to participate in the Texas High Performance Schools Consortium as established under the Texas Education Code (TEC), §7.0561, for the purpose of informing the governor, legislature, and commissioner of education concerning methods for transforming public schools in Texas by improving student learning through the development of innovative, next-generation learning standards and assessment and accountability systems.
  - (2) Consortium principles--The following four principles shall be addressed by the consortium as mandated by the TEC, §7.0561:
    - (A) digital learning--engagement of students in digital learning, including, but not limited to, engagement through the use of electronic textbooks and instructional materials adopted under the TEC, Chapter 31, Subchapters B and B-1, and courses offered through the state virtual school network under the TEC, Subchapter 30A;
    - (B) learning standards--emphasis on learning standards that focus on high-priority learning standards identified in coordination with school districts and open-enrollment charter schools participating in the consortium;
    - (C) multiple assessments--use of multiple assessments of learning capable of being used to inform students, parents, school districts, and open-enrollment charter schools on an ongoing basis concerning the extent to which learning is occurring and the actions consortium participants are taking to improve learning; and
    - (D) local control--reliance on local control that enables communities and parents to be involved in the important decisions regarding the education of their children.
  - (3) Curricular goal--A measurable learning outcome expected as a result of student participation in instruction covering a specific portion of the curriculum.
  - (4) High-priority learning standards--Learning standards that are manageable in number and of high importance in student learning such as those that have been identified by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) as "readiness standards." Additional high-priority learning standards will be identified no earlier than the 2013-2014 school year in coordination with school districts and open-enrollment charter schools participating in the consortium.
  - (5) Learning standards--Standards that a student must master to be successful in a competitive, postsecondary environment, including standards approved by the State Board of Education as part of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills.
  - (6) School district--For the purposes of this section, the definition of school district includes an open-enrollment charter school unless otherwise specified.
- (b) Eligibility. To be eligible to apply for participation in the consortium, the following criteria must be met, as applicable.

- (1) A school district and its participating campus(es) may not have been awarded the lowest performance rating as its most recent state academic accountability rating under §97.1001 of this title (relating to Accountability Rating System).
  - (2) Either a school district or its participating campus(es) must have received either national, statewide, or regional public acknowledgment, from an organization relying on expertise in the field of education, for district-wide or campus-wide excellence in academic performance or innovative practices in one the areas described by the Consortium principles set forth in (a)(2) of this rule.
  - (3) In accordance with the TEC, §7.0561(c), an open-enrollment charter school must have been awarded an exemplary rating as its most recent state academic accountability rating under §97.1001 of this title.
  - (4) A school district and an open-enrollment charter school must be in compliance with the TEA audit requirements determined under §109.41 of this title (relating to Financial Accountability System Resource Guide).
  - (5) A school district and an open-enrollment charter school shall also meet other criteria determined by the commissioner and specified in the request for application (RFA).
- (c) Application.
- (1) An eligible school district must apply through the RFA process to be considered as a participant in the consortium.
  - (2) An eligible school district must submit an application fee not to exceed \$500 to cover the costs of the application review process.
  - (3) In the application, a school district must:
    - (A) identify the individual who will serve as the school district's coordinator for consortium activities and point of contact for participation in the consortium;
    - (B) designate which campus or campuses will participate in the consortium;
    - (C) provide a detailed action plan to support improved instruction of and learning by students that includes the following features:
      - (i) a description of how the school district and its campuses currently are addressing or plan to address the four consortium principles specified in subsection (a)(2) of this section;
      - (ii) a detailed description of the curricular goals to be addressed in the action plan;
      - (iii) a description of how resources will be acquired to support teachers in improving student learning;
      - (iv) an analysis of evidence that demonstrates the accuracy of any assessment(s) used or planned to be used in the school district to measure the quality of learning, including the methodology and metrics employed; and
      - (v) a description of any waiver(s) for a prohibition, requirement, or restriction for which the school district wishes to apply.
    - (D) provide evidence that school district stakeholders, including parents, teachers, students, and community members, have participated in the development and/or review and approval of the action plan;
    - (E) provide evidence that the application and action plan have been considered and approved by the school district's board of trustees;

- (F) include assurances that the school district and its board of trustees will conform to the policies and procedures governing the operation of the consortium, as established by the commissioner, addressing such issues as attendance, reporting, financial support, and mentoring; and
  - (G) meet any additional requirements specified in the RFA.
- (d) Criteria and methodology for selecting participants in the consortium.
- (1) Applications will be selected based on quality of the application and the extent to which the district's participation ensures representation in the following categories in compliance with the TEC, §7.0561(c).
    - (A) Type. Using definitions of type as set forth in the TEA's District Type Data for 2009-10, the commissioner shall select at least one district in each of the following categories:
      - (i) urban, as represented by categories titled Major Urban and Other Central City;
      - (ii) suburban, as represented by categories titled Major Suburban and Other Central City Suburban;
      - (iii) non-metropolitan, as represented by categories titled Independent Town, Non-Metropolitan: Fast-Growing, Non-Metropolitan: Stable; and
      - (iv) rural, as represented by the category titled Rural.
    - (B) Size. Using student enrollment figures reported to the TEA for the previous school year, the commissioner shall select at least one district in each of the following categories:
      - (i) large district: district with a student population of 10,000 or more students;
      - (ii) mid-size district: district with a student population between 1,000 and 9,999; and
      - (iii) small district: district with a student population of 999 or fewer.
    - (C) Student demographics. Using the most recent available data in the TEA's Public Education Information Management System, the commissioner shall select districts whose student demographics, when aggregated with other consortium participants, will result in a diverse student population that is representative of the state's overall public school student population in the following categories:
      - (i) ethnicity and race;
      - (ii) economically disadvantaged;
      - (iii) English language learners;
      - (iv) students identified to receive special education services; and
      - (v) students identified as gifted and talented.
  - (2) In selecting school districts, the commissioner shall ensure, in accordance with the TEC, §7.0561(d), that the aggregate number of students enrolled in campuses participating in the consortium does not exceed 5.0% of the total number of students enrolled in Texas public schools based on student enrollment figures reported to the TEA for the previous school year. In order to ensure compliance with this statutory requirement:
    - (A) a school district may designate in its application the entire district or only one or more campus(es) to participate in the consortium; and

- (B) the commissioner may require a school district to reduce the number of campuses designated in the school district's application as a condition for participation in the consortium.
- (3) The commissioner may select no more than 20 school districts to participate in the consortium.
- (e) Notification. The TEA will notify each applicant in writing of its selection or non-selection for participation in the consortium.
- (f) Financing of consortium.
  - (1) For the purpose of implementing this section, the commissioner or a school district participating in the consortium may accept gifts, grants, or donations from any source, including a private entity or governmental entity.
  - (2) To recover TEA costs, the commissioner may charge a participation fee of at least \$2,500 annually and not to exceed \$10,000 annually to each school district selected to participate in the consortium. The commissioner may adjust the fee proportionate to the number of campuses the district has designated to participate in the consortium. Each school district's participation fee shall be reduced by the application fee amount paid in accordance with subsection (c)(2) of this section.

## Appendix 2 – Letter of Commitment Template

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Texas High Performance Schools Consortium Manager  
Texas Education Agency  
1701 North Congress  
Austin, Texas 78701

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

On behalf of the \_\_\_\_\_ Independent School District, I would like affirm our desire to participate in the Texas High Performance Schools Consortium (“Consortium”) for the purposes of informing the governor, legislature, and Commissioner of Education (commissioner) concerning methods for transforming Texas public schools by improving student learning through the development of innovative, next-generation learning standards and assessment and accountability systems. As a member of the Consortium, we promise to support the work of the Consortium and comply with requirements set forth by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and the commissioner.

We understand that participation in the Consortium will include periodic convenings to discuss methods to transform learning opportunities for all students, build cross-district and cross-school support systems and training, and share best practices tools and processes.

We certify that the application incorporated input from stakeholders, including, but not limited to, teachers, parents, students, and business and community members and has been approved by our board of trustees. This plan was approved by the school district’s board of trustees on     (date)    . We agree to conform to the policies and procedures governing the operation of the Consortium, as established by the commissioner, addressing such issues as Consortium attendance, reporting, financial support, and mentoring.

We understand that TEA may charge an annual participation fee to each school district selected to participate in the Consortium and that the fee may be adjusted based on the number of students enrolled in campuses the district has designated to participate in the Consortium. We understand that TEA may alter the number of campuses participating from our district in order to assure diverse representation and/or ensure that the Consortium does not include more than 5% of the total student population of the state.

We understand that failure to fulfill the financial or programmatic requirements of the Consortium may result in our district’s removal from the Consortium.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_ District Superintendent

\_\_\_\_\_ President of District Board of Trustees

\_\_\_\_\_ Participating Principal(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Participating Principal(s)

\_\_\_\_\_ Participating Principal(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Participating Principal(s)

\_\_\_\_\_ Participating Principal(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Participating Principal(s)

\_\_\_\_\_ District’s Consortium Coordinator