Program Guidelines

2015-2016 Title I 1003(a) Priority and Focus School Grant

Authorized by P.L 107-110, No Child Left Behind, Title I School Improvement Program

Application Closing Date—5:00 p.m., Central Time
Application Due Date - October 26, 2015

TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY

**Division of School Improvement and Support
1701 North Congress Avenue
Austin, Texas 78701**

Contents

Introduction to the Program Guidelines

TEA, as the pass-through entity[1], is the grantee[2] from the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) and TEA awards subgrants to non-federal entities[3] such as local educational agencies (LEAs), including school districts, 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 subgrantees[4]. 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 part of the request for application (RFA), Program Guidelines, is to be used in conjunction with the General and Fiscal Guidelines and the schedule instructions. The Standard Application System (SAS) consists of all schedules (i.e., forms) to be completed in order for the applicant to be eligible for funding. The application to which these instructions refer must be submitted electronically through the eGrants system.

For applicants selected for funding, all guidelines and instructions will be incorporated by reference into the Notice of Grant Award (NOGA).

Requirement for User Name and Password

To access eGrants and apply for this grant, you must have access to the Texas Education Agency Secure Environment (TEASE). In the near future, eGrants access will migrate from TEASE to the new secure environment, TEA Login (TEAL). Follow these steps to apply for user names and passwords on both TEASE and TEAL:

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[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.

1. Visit the TEASE—Request Access Online page of the TEA website. Select Request New Account to begin the process of applying for a TEASE account online.

2. Visit the TEA Login (TEAL) page of the TEA website. Select Request New User Account to begin the process of applying for a TEAL account online.

3. To apply for eGrants access once you have been assigned a TEASE account, log on to TEASE and select "Add/Modify Application Access" from the Application List page.

The Applying for a Grant page of the TEA website includes links to guidance on applying for TEASE, TEAL, and eGrants access.

Application Submission through eGrants

Submit the application for this grant program electronically through the TEA eGrants system. Refer to the General and Fiscal Guidelines for more specific information about accessing eGrants and obtaining the required TEASE user ID and password.

Applications must be submitted as follows:

- Those submitted by public LEAs must be signed electronically by the superintendent of the school district or a designee.

- Applications submitted by regional Education Service Centers (ESCs) must be signed electronically by the executive director or a designee.

- Applications submitted by open-enrollment charter schools must be signed electronically by the chief operating officer of the school.

- Campuses and campus charter schools must apply through their public school district, and the application must be signed electronically by the superintendent or designee.

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 you review all referenced sections of the General and Fiscal Guidelines when preparing your application.**

US Department of Education Appropriations

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

Category	Amount
Total funds available for this project	Approximately $46,176,535
Percentage to be financed with federal funds	100%
Amount of federal funds	Approximately $46,176,535
Percentage to be financed from nonfederal sources	0
Amount of nonfederal funds	0

Grant Timeline

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

Grant at a Glance

This section provides fundamental information pertinent to the grant program.

Authorizing Legislation

The Title I, 1003(a) Priority and Focus School Grant is authorized by the flexibility waiver granted to Texas from the USDE, for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) which is commonly known as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. This grant is funded through the Title I, Part A, Improving Basic programs operated by Local Education Agencies (LEAs). Any recipient of this grant must be eligible for and receive Title I, Part A funds.

Purpose of Program

Title I, Part A Improving Basic Programs Operated by LEAs, provides supplemental resources to LEAs to help schools with high concentrations of students from low-income families provide high-quality education, which will enable all children to meet the federal student performance standards. Title I, Part A, supports schools in implementing either a schoolwide program or a targeted assistance program.

The Title I, 1003(a) Priority and Focus School grant provides funds to LEAs applying on behalf of their priority and focus schools that are supplemental to the Title I, Part A funds. These funds must only be used to support LEA and school- level school improvement efforts to directly benefit these schools.

The Title I, 1003(a) Priority and Focus School Grant should be used to support the designated schools in implementation of their targeted improvement plan.

It is recommended that all Title I, Part A schools have a school support team consisting of two to three members as appropriate to monitor program compliance and effectiveness. The school site-based decision-making committee or other existing committee could provide the school support team function.

Eligible Applicants

See the General and Fiscal Guidelines, Eligibility Requirements.

The following LEAs are eligible to apply for the Title I, 1003(a) Priority and Focus School Grant.

■ LEAs who have school identified on the Priority School List that are not receiving TTIPS Funding

■ LEAs who have schools identified on the Focus School List that are not receiving TTIPS Funding

The following eligibility requirements also apply:
■ TEA reserves the right not to award a grant to an LEA or charter school that is identified by TEA as a high-risk grantee.

■ An open-enrollment charter school shall become ineligible for grant funding (or, if a school has applied for and received funding for this grant, will have its grant funding placed on hold) if the commissioner notifies the school's charter holder of his intent to (1) revoke or nonrenewal the charter under TEC Chapter 12, or (2) close the school under TEC Chapter 39, for any of the reasons set forth in either statutory provision. If the commissioner ultimately revokes or denies renewal of an open-enrollment charter of a charter holder or closes a school that has been awarded funds under this grant program, grant funding shall be discontinued.

■ The applicant must be in compliance with submitting the annual audit to TEA, as described in the General and Fiscal Guidelines.

Eligibility List

The list of Priority and Focus schools can be found at:
http://tea.texas.gov/Student_Testing_and_Accountability/Monitoring_and_Interventions/School_Improvement_and_Support/Priority,_Focus,_and_Reward_Schools/

Shared Services Arrangement

See the General and Fiscal Guidelines, Shared Services Arrangements.

Shared services arrangements (SSAs) are not allowed.

More Than One school

An LEA will submit one application for their list of Priority and Focus schools

Application Funding

See the following sections of the General and Fiscal Guidelines:

■ Grant Funding
■ Continuation Funding

- Fund Management
- Use of Funds

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.

Limitation of Administrative Funds

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), Administrative Costs.

Reasonable and necessary administrative costs may be budgeted and expended as approved by TEA. Funds requested for administrative use must be requested in the application on the appropriate budget schedules.

Administrative funds include both direct administrative costs and indirect costs. Direct administrative costs may include costs associated with accounting and other fiscal activities and auditing, provided these costs are not typically included in the indirect cost pool, and overall program administration. Direct administrative costs also include salaries and benefits for staff who supervise activities of program staff and insurance that protects the grantee. Refer to the SAS instructions for Schedule BS6004—Program Budget Summary and Support for more detailed information pertaining to administrative costs

Pre-Award Costs

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

Pre-award costs are permitted for this grant. These pre-award costs will be allowed from July 1, 2015, until the submission of this grant application, and will be listed on the BS6004 schedule.

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 RFA, the grant program, or for assistance with the applicants' conference:

> Leticia Govea, School Improvement and Support
> leticia.govea@tea.texas.gov
> Phone: (512) 463-1427
> Fax: (512) 936-6474

Errata Notices

See the General and Fiscal Guidelines, Errata Notices.

Email Bulletins

See the General and Fiscal Guidelines, Email Bulletins.

Program Elements

This section provides detailed information about the grant program.

Program Description

The Title I, 1003(a) Priority and Focus School Grant provides supplemental funds to Title I schools identified as a non-TTIPS Priority School or a Focus School. Priority schools are to address the Reading and Math Safeguards and Focus Schools address the widest gaps between Reading and Math of the federal student groups.

Priority and focus schools are required to begin and/or continue engaging in the Texas Accountability Intervention System (TAIS) continuous improvement process and align it around the ESEA turnaround principles and critical success factors (CSFs). The LEA is responsible for assisting identified schools in all aspects of the school improvement process, which include data analysis, needs assessment, and developing, implementing, and monitoring a plan for improvement.

Supplement, Not Supplant

See the General and Fiscal Guidelines, Supplement, Not Supplant.

The supplement, not supplant provision does apply to this grant program.

Indirect Costs

The grantee must use the restricted indirect cost rate. For this federally funded grant, you must use the **lesser** of your current, approved indirect cost rate or 8%.

Refer to the Indirect Cost Handbook in the Handbooks and Other Guidance section of the Division of Grants Administration Administering a Grant page for more information on indirect costs and the correlation to the supplement, not supplant provision.

Use the Maximum Indirect Costs Worksheet, posted on the Division Federal Fiscal Compliance and Reporting Indirect Cost Rates page, to calculate the maximum indirect costs that can be claimed for a grant.

Application Requirements and Assurances

This section describes the two types of requirements that applicants must address in the application (such as with a narrative description, an activity timeline, or a checklist) 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 Section 22.0834 of the Texas Education Code (TEC), any person offered employment by any entity that contracts with TEA or receives grant funds administered by TEA (i.e., a grantee or subgrantee) is subject to the fingerprinting requirement. TEA is prohibited from awarding grant funds to any entity, including nonprofit organizations, that fails to comply with this requirement. For details, refer to the General and Fiscal Guidelines, Fingerprinting Requirement.

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

Priority non-TTIPS Schools will engage in the Texas Accountability Intervention System (TAIS) continuous improvement process, evaluate current school staff, and create a plan to be submitted that addresses the ESEA turnaround principles. The seven turnaround principles are:

1. Provide Strong Leadership

2. Ensure that teachers are effective and able to improve instruction

3. Redesign the school day, week, or year to include additional time for student learning and teacher collaboration

4. Strengthen the school's instructional program based on student needs and ensure that the instructional program is research based, rigorous, and aligned with the State academic content standards

5. Use data to inform instruction and for continuous improvement, including providing time for collaboration on the use of data

6. Establish a school environment that improves school safety and discipline and addresses other non-academic factors that impact student achievement, such as students' social, emotional, and health needs

7. Provide ongoing mechanisms for family and community engagement

Focus Schools review the ESEA turnaround principles listed above in order to:

1. Decrease the school's widest gaps between the seven federal student subgroups in reading/math performance

2. Meet the Annual Measureable Objective (AMO) targets of current year AMOs established in the waiver for state proficiency rates or higher for the seven federal student subgroups. Current operational AMOs can be reviewed here: http://tea.texas.gov/index2.aspx?id=25769803880

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:

Priority and focus schools are required to begin and/or continue engaging in the Texas Accountability Intervention System (TAIS) continuous improvement process and align it around the ESEA turnaround principles and critical success factors (CSFs). The LEA is responsible for assisting identified schools in all aspects of the continuous improvement process, which include data analysis, needs assessment, and developing, implementing, and monitoring a plan for improvement.

- Priority Schools will:

1. Designate a District Coordinator of School Improvement (DCSI

2. Participate in required trainings to be announced by the Texas Center for District and School Support (TCDSS), including attendance at the 2015 Advancing Improvement in Education (AIE) conference; and

3. Through engaging in the TAIS continuous improvement process referenced above, evaluate current school staff and create a plan that addresses the ESEA turnaround principles. This plan, based on the turnaround principles, will be fully implemented by the school in the 2015-16 school year

- Focus Schools will:

1. designate a district contact;

2. review ESEA turnaround principles and identify, implement, and include in 2015-16 campus improvement plan, no less than one instructional intervention specifically targeted to address closing existing achievement gaps; and

3. include reasons for identification and targeted instructional interventions in the school's 2015-16 campus improvement plan that will be fully implemented during the school year 2015-16; and

4. Districts will work with their local ESC for training in areas of need.

Program-Specific Assurances

See the General and Fiscal Guidelines, Provisions and Assurances.

The program-specific assurances for this grant program are listed in the SAS. Refer to Schedule CS7000—Provisions, Assurances, and Certifications.

Allowable 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 for this grant may include but are not limited to the following:

Field Trips

Field trips may be funded under the grant program. Only the following types of field trips are allowable:

- An educational field trip for students to gain firsthand knowledge away from the classroom at places of learning. For example, institutions of higher education, museums, etc.

Field Trips will require a written justification form. To access the Field Trips Justification form, refer to the Administering a Grant page.

Out-of-State Travel

Out-of-state travel costs are allowable. Out-of-state travel costs should be minimal. Travel costs are allowable as long as 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 access the Out-of-State Travel Justification form, refer to the Administering a Grant page.

General Allowable Activities and Use of Funds

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

Strategies that address the Turnaround Principles and Critical Success Factors which include:

- Provide Strong Leadership

- Ensure that teachers are effective and able to improve instruction

- Redesign the school day, week, or year to include additional time for student learning and teacher collaboration

- Strengthen the school's instructional program based on student needs and ensure that the instructional program is research based, rigorous, and aligned with the State academic content standards

- Use data to inform instruction and for continuous improvement, including providing time for collaboration on the use of data

- Establish a school environment that improves school safety and discipline and addresses other non-academic factors that impact student achievement, such as students' social, emotional, and health needs

- Provide ongoing mechanisms for family and community engagement

Unallowable Activities and Use of Funds

Advisory Council

An advisory council may not be funded under the grant program.

Cost of Membership in Any Civic or Community Organization

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

Hosting or Sponsoring of Conferences

Conferences may not be hosted or sponsored under the grant program.

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

The cost of travel costs for officials such as the executive director, superintendent, or board members may not be funded under the grant program.

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

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 for state-funded grants
- Professional Service Provider (PSP) fees
- Field trips to amusement parks

Program Evaluation

By submitting this application, the applicant agrees to comply with any evaluation requirements that may be established by TEA and agrees to submit the required evaluation reports in the format and time requested by TEA. TEA will collect and analyze relevant data from PEIMS if it is available.

Specific critical success factors and milestones will be developed in a manner determined appropriate by TEA.

Critical Success Factors

Critical success factors are generally observable behaviors that are supported by research to be crucial to achieving the goals and outcomes of the grant program. Each critical success factor is monitored using measurable indicators, and these indicators enable TEA to determine whether grantees are proceeding appropriately to achieve the desired outcomes. For example, if a program

has a goal of increased student participation in more rigorous college preparatory courses, one should measure at the beginning of the following school year that more students are actually enrolled in such classes than previously. Student participation in these rigorous college preparatory courses is a critical success factor that is measured through enrollment figures.

Milestones

Milestones are key processes or structures that need to be in place before the critical success factor is likely to occur. Using the previous example, before a school can demonstrate increased enrollment in rigorous college preparatory courses, it probably needs to offer a greater variety of these classes and hire or assign qualified teachers to teach them. A school would also want to develop a student recruitment plan. All such factors that are precursors to increased enrollment are called milestones.

Limits on Contracted Evaluators

When a grantee chooses, or is required under a grant, to hire a contracted evaluator, TEA believes that the evaluator must have the capability to remain independent and objective in carrying out the evaluation. "Independent and objective" implies that there is no influence or control, real or perceived, exerted on the evaluator by any person who is involved in the provision of program services. Therefore, the only way in which a contracted evaluator can be truly independent and objective is not to be involved in any manner with the provision of program services or activities. Otherwise, the evaluator is, at least in part, evaluating its own services.

In addition, TEA is aware that some grant writers develop and design the grant program, write the entire grant application, and then wish to evaluate the grant program. TEA also believes that this scenario poses a conflict of interest for the evaluator, in that the evaluator is evaluating the grant program that he or she designed, developed, and wrote. Again, it is not possible for the evaluator to function independently and objectively if the evaluator performed in this capacity. It is certainly acceptable for the grant writer to receive some information from a potential evaluator to include in the evaluation section of the grant application with regard to an appropriate evaluation plan or design, but communication between the grant writer and evaluator should be limited to that specific topic.

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

Federal Grant Requirements

Equitable Access and Participation

See the General and Fiscal Guidelines, Equitable Access and Participation.

This requirement does apply to this federally funded grant program.

Private Nonprofit School Participation

See the General and Fiscal Guidelines, Private Nonprofit School Participation.

This requirement does not apply to this federally funded grant program.

Maintenance of Effort

See the General and Fiscal Guidelines, Maintenance of Effort.

This requirement does apply to this federally funded grant program.

Application Elements

This section describes the requirements and attachments that must be addressed in and included with the application.

Required Attachments

See the following sections of the General and Fiscal Guidelines:

- Fiscal-Related Documentation Required to Be on File
- Required Fiscal-Related Attachments
- Required Program-Related Attachments

This section describes the two types of attachments that may be required to be submitted with the application: fiscal-related attachments and program-related attachments.

Required Fiscal-Related Attachments

See the General and Fiscal Guidelines, Required Fiscal-Related Attachments, for a general description of fiscal-related documents that can be required as attachments to the application.

For a list of the fiscal-related attachments required for this grant application, refer to the Program Information section of the main eGrants page for this grant. Required attachments are notated "Attachment" in the list of RFA documents provided in the Program Information section.

Required Program-Related Attachments

The applicant must submit with the application any required attachments listed below.

1. The Use of Funds Questionnaire attachment will be required to be completed and attached when the Grant application is submitted for funds placed in the 6600 object code (capital outlay) when completing the BS6004 Program Budget Summary Schedule

Adding Attachments

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

General Instructions

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

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

Documents only need to be attached once. Do not attach duplicate documents with each amendment. Only attach more than once if the attachment is being revised.

Naming Attachments

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

Make sure that each attachment has a file extension (.pdf, .doc, .rtf, .xls, .bmp, .zip, .txt).

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

Scanning Documents

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

- Use an OCR or DPI setting of 200 DPI.

- Try to avoid creating .jpg files. If possible, create PDF documents with the scanner.

Zipping Files

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

Attaching Files to an eGrants Application

1. Ensure that the security level for your internet browser is set to Medium (Tools > Internet Options, Security tab).

2. Ensure that the document is saved on your computer, using the naming instructions above.

3. On the Grant Menu page, select Attach File. The required attachments are listed and described at the top of the dialog box. If you are attaching a document that is not listed, check Other.

4. In the Add Attachments pane, select the title of the attachment from the list, or if you selected Other above, type in the title.

5. Select the Browse button. A standard Windows browser appears. Find the file.

6. Select Attach.

7. Select Refresh to see the name of the document in the Documents Submitted in This Version pane. If the attachment does not appear, you may have to rename your document with a shorter name and start over.

8. Repeat this process to attach all your documents.

Reference Material and Appendixes

The following website links contain additional information to assist with program requirements and compliance questions;

- Additional information on the TEA website is available at:

http://tea.texas.gov/Student_Testing_and_Accountability/Monitoring_and_Interventions/School_Improvement_and_Support/School_Improvement_and_Support/

- Additional information on the TCDSS website on implementing the TAIS process is available at:

http://tcdss.net/

- The Financial Accountability System Resource Guide:

http://tea.texas.gov/Finance_and_Grants/Financial_Accountability/Financial__Accountability_System_Resource_Guide/

- Division of Grants Administration:

http://tea.texas.gov/Finance_and_Grants/Administering_a_Grant.aspx