

April 20, 2011

TO THE ADMINISTRATOR ADDRESSED:

SUBJECT: Texas Title I Priority Schools Grant Program, Cycle 2, Funded from
Federal Section 1003(g) School Improvement Grant (SIG) Funds

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) is committed to assisting local educational agencies (LEAs) in turning around Texas's persistently lowest-achieving schools and improving the academic performance of all campuses eligible for Title I. This letter is to notify LEAs that are eligible to apply on behalf of one or more eligible campuses for the Texas Title I Priority Schools (TTIPS), Cycle 2, grant program, funded from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Section 1003(g) School Improvement Grant (SIG) funds, that the state's application for funding was approved by the U. S. Department of Education (USDE) on April 1, 2011.

State Application Available for Review

The USDE has posted the state's approved application, which includes a draft of the competitive campus application and the scoring rubrics, on the [USDE website](http://www2.ed.gov/programs/sif/summary2010/index.html) at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/sif/summary2010/index.html>. While this draft copy of the application was required to be included in the state's application to the USDE, the complete version of the request for application (RFA) will be published on **April 22, 2011**. Grant applications will be due to TEA on **Tuesday, June 21, 2011**.

Grant Eligibility and Awards

Campuses are eligible if identified as "persistently lowest achieving" or have met other eligibility criteria in the federal definition, within one of the three tiers defined in the federal guidelines. LEAs may apply on behalf of one or more eligible campuses for these discretionary (competitive) grant funds. An LEA with more than one eligible campus must submit a separate grant application for each campus for which the LEA chooses to apply for funding. The minimum campus grant to be awarded is \$50,000, and the maximum award is \$2,000,000 per year for each of three years. Technical assistance to grantees will be available, on behalf of TEA, from the School Improvement Resource Center (SIRC) at Region XIII Education Service Center (ESC).

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The lists of eligible Tier I, Tier II, and Tier III campuses and the definition and methodology for determining eligibility are posted on [TEA's NCLB website](http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index4.aspx?id=7354&menu_id=798) at http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index4.aspx?id=7354&menu_id=798.

Grant Requirements

All Cycle 2 grants will be awarded for three years of funding, contingent on appropriations. Some TTIPS Cycle 2 grants will be funded from carried-over ARRA funds, guaranteeing three years of implementation, while other grants will be funded from the state's annual appropriation of 1003(g) funds for one year of implementation, with Year 2 and 3 allocations contingent on continued 1003(g) appropriations. TEA will prioritize the awarded grants to determine which grants are guaranteed three years of funding and which grants are awarded three years of funding with the second and third year of funding contingent on continued appropriations. TEA's decision on prioritizing the awards for funding is final and may not be appealed. Grants awarded for one-year of implementation with Year 2 and 3 allocations contingent on continued appropriations must be able to expend the full Year 1 grant amount in the first year of implementation.

The purpose of the TTIPS grant is to provide funding to LEAs that have the capacity and commitment to implement rapid, dramatic reforms to turn around the state's most struggling campuses. Tier I and Tier II grantees must fully implement, beginning at the start of the 2011-2012 school year, one of the following four federally required models of reform by implementing a design developed by the LEA or the state's TEA-designed program supported with technical assistance provided by SIRC on behalf of TEA:

- *Turnaround Model:* Replace the principal, screen existing school staff, and rehire no more than half the teachers; adopt a new governance structure; and improve the school through curriculum reform, professional development, extending learning time, and other strategies.
- *Transformation Model:* Replace the principal and improve the school through comprehensive curriculum reform, professional development, extending learning time, and other strategies.
- *Restart Model:* Convert a school or close it and re-open it as a charter school or under an education management organization.
- *School Closure:* Close the school and send the students to higher-achieving schools in the district.

Information on the TEA-designed models and the technical assistance provided is available on the [SIRC website](http://www.sirc texas.net/ttips/ttips_options.html) at http://www.sirc texas.net/ttips/ttips_options.html.

A Tier III campus may choose to implement one of the four models described above or choose to design its own model as long as it meets all the requirements of the final federal requirements for the model selected.

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The following TEA-Designed Models may also be considered by a Tier III campus, and a link is provided to find more specific information about each model.

Tier III Transformation

The Tier III Transformation Model aligns to the Transformation Model described above with the exception of requiring the replacement of school leadership. In the Tier III Transformation model, the LEA/campus is required to evaluate the effectiveness of the current principal and use the results of the evaluation to determine whether the principal should be replaced, be kept on the campus, or be provided leadership coaching or training.

<http://www.sirctexas.net/ttips/transformation/index.html>

Texas Early College High School (ECHS)

Early College High Schools (ECHSs) are autonomous, small schools designed to create a seamless transition between high school and college. ECHSs provide a course of study that enables students to receive both a high school diploma and either an associate's degree or at least 60 credit hours toward a baccalaureate degree. Strong collaborative partnerships between schools and the IHE are developed to ensure the ECHS design elements are met. Schools implementing the ECHS model must apply for designation status through the ECHS designation process. The pre-implementation period is required to design, develop, and prepare for implementation with the guidance of the state-approved technical assistance provider.

http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index3.aspx?id=4464&menu_id3=814

Texas Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (T-STEM)

Texas Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (T-STEM) academies are rigorous secondary schools focused on improving instruction and academic performance in the STEM areas. T-STEM Academies use the Design Blueprint to build and implement STEM schools that address seven benchmarks: 1) mission-driven leadership; 2) school culture and design; 3) student outreach, recruitment, and retention; 4) teacher selection, development, and retention; 5) curriculum, instruction, and assessment; 6) strategic alliances; and 7) academy advancement and sustainability. Schools implementing the T-STEM model must apply for designation status through the T-STEM designation process. The pre-implementation period is required to design, develop, and prepare for implementation with the guidance of the state approved technical assistance provider. http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index3.aspx?id=4470&menu_id3=814

College for All

College for All infuses college-ready reforms into an LEA model that enables every student to graduate with a minimum of 12 college-level credits and prepared to earn a post-secondary credential or degree. Design elements/strategies for this model include the following: 1) comprehensive district approach; 2) college-ready curriculum and instruction program; 3) strong P-16 partnerships; 4) comprehensive academic and

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social supports; 5) intensive summer academy for rising ninth graders including administration of a Texas Success Initiative assessment to determine level of readiness for college-level courses; and 6) college-going culture. The pre-implementation period is required to design, develop, and prepare for implementation with the guidance of the state approved technical assistance provider.

http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=2147488635&menu_id=814

http://www.jff.org/sites/default/files/college_success_for_all.pdf

Any campus may choose to implement one of the TEA-Designed Models with technical assistance from SIRC at ESC 13 on behalf of the agency or to implement its own model design. Regardless of the design chosen, the model must meet all of the federal requirements of the grant program. Applicants will receive priority points for selecting one of the TEA-Designed Models, but that in no way guarantees selection of the grant application for funding. Applicants may also receive priority points for implementing or expanding Supplemental Educational Services (SES), as defined by federal rule and state guidance, to its grant program. More information on the SES requirements is available on the [TEA NCLB web site](http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=6217&menu_id=798) at http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=6217&menu_id=798.

Grant Flexibility

TEA was approved by USDE to implement flexibility to allow a Tier I, Tier II, or Tier III grantee campus that has implemented, in whole or in part, either the Turnaround, Restart, or Transformation model within the last two years to continue or complete the implementation of the intervention model with TTIPS Cycle 2 grant funds. For example, if a grantee campus has replaced its principal within the last two years (for the 2008–2009 school year or more recently), the LEA/campus will not be required to hire another new principal. An LEA/campus that receives TTIPS Cycle 2 funds in accordance with this flexibility must fully implement the selected model as required by the final federal requirements. In other words, if the school had been implementing the model only in part, it must use the funds it receives to expand its implementation so that it fully complies with the federal regulatory requirements.

Training Opportunity and Clarifying Information

TEA and SIRC staff will present a prerecorded webinar available on the *TEA Grant Opportunities* website at <http://burleson.tea.state.tx.us/grantopportunities/forms> on April 29, 2011. On the TEA Grant Opportunities website, in the “Select Search Options” box, select the name of the program/RFA from the list. Scroll down to “Application and Support Information.”

Additional information related to the TTIPS Cycle 2 grant program will be posted on the [NCLB website](http://www.nclb.gov) as it becomes available at http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index4.aspx?id=7354&menu_id=798. Resources and other school improvement information are available at www.esc13.net/sirc. The RFA and links to all resources related to the TTIPS grant program will be posted on the [TEA Grant Opportunities website](http://burleson.tea.state.tx.us/GrantOpportunities/forms) at <http://burleson.tea.state.tx.us/GrantOpportunities/forms>. In the “Select Search Options” box, select the

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name of the program/RFA from the dropdown list. Scroll down to "Application and Support Information" to view all documents that pertain to this RFA.

Please note that due to the competitive nature of this grant program, TEA staff are limited to directing callers to the answer contained in the materials posted on the website or researching the answer to a new question and posting the response in the FAQ document on the website above. To ensure that no prospective applicant may obtain a competitive advantage because of acquisition of information unknown to other prospective applicants, any and all questions about the RFA must be submitted in writing to Mr. Randy Willis in the Division of NCLB Program Coordination at TEA via electronic mail at NCLBTIPS@tea.state.tx.us or by telephone at (512) 463-9374.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cory Green". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Cory Green, Senior Director

Division of NCLB Program Coordination