

Request for Letters of Interest for Math Innovation Zone Pilot Grants

Questions and Responses

1. Attachment 1 states that we are to review and complete Attachment 1 and 2. However, Attachment 1 only seems to explain the purpose and deliverables? It is my assumption that you are looking for a formatted response in Attachment 2A - 2D for each district applying? Do we still submit Attachment 1 as Part of our letter of Interest?

This is an error located on Attachment 1, Page 12 of the initial draft of the document. The Request for Letters of Interest initially read: "Please review and complete Attachment 1, which serve as the Letter of Interest for Pilot and Round 2 Grants for Math Innovation Zones."

The Request for Letters of Interest has been updated to read: "Please review and complete Attachments 2A, 2B, and 2C, which serve as the Letter of Interest for Pilot and Round 2 Grants for Math Innovation Zones."

As a response to this Request for Letters of Interest, districts and charters should only submit Attachments 2A, 2B, and 2C as the Letter of Interest for this program. There is no need to submit any other attachments as part of the Letter of Interest.

2. I would request that we are allowed to use Job Descriptions in lieu of Personal Resumes of staff members engaging in the project.

As a response to this Request for Letters of Interest, TEA strongly suggests the submission of resumes of relevant district or open enrollment charter school personnel working directly on Math Innovation Zones. A respondent may choose to submit other relevant information either in lieu of or in addition to resumes if the documents provide context helpful in understanding the Math Innovation Zone team at the school district or open-enrollment charter school.

3. Where can I submit a Competitive Letter of Interest for the Math Innovative Zone grant?

Competitive Letters of Interest for Math Innovation Zones must be submitted to specialprojects@tea.texas.gov by 5pm CDT on April 27, 2018. **Attachments 2A, 2B, and 2C** of the Request for Letters of Interest are the only documents that should be submitted and will serve as the complete Letter of Interest for Math Innovation Zones.

4. Is _ISD eligible to apply for the Math Innovations Zone grant. I can't find the list of districts that are eligible to apply?

All school districts and open-enrollment charter schools are eligible to be awarded Math Innovation Zone Pilot Grants as long as the school district or charter meets the criteria included in the Request for Letters of Interest, Attachment 1, Page 2.

5. Our Charter school has grades Kindergarten through Sixth grade, then they transfer to the public school. Our question is, can we still apply if we don't have Seventh or Eighth grade?

TEA is open to creative feeder pattern approaches to scale the changes necessary to promote student participation and achievement in Algebra I in 8th grade. If a district or open enrollment charter school chooses a feeder pattern approach that is different than the feeder pattern described in Attachment 1 of the Request for Letters of Interest, the district or charter school should justify the approach in the Letter of Interest.

6. Where is the list of targeted vendors we must use?

The State Approved Software Vendors for Math Innovation Zones can be found on the Math Innovation Zones [webpage](#). The State Approved Technical Assistance Network for Math Innovation Zones will be created through a competitive Request For Qualifications process in the spring of 2018.

7. If we already have an LMS (we do in PK-5 EMPOWER but we are just getting started with it) do we have to change or can they be added to the list of vendors?

The Math Innovation Zones Program does not have requirements with regard to Learning Management Systems nor is there an intention of selecting a state approved list for Learning Management Systems.

8. Do we factor in the cost of subs for the time teachers in PK/3/6 are out for the required PD or is the district supposed to cover that?

Funds from the Math Innovation Zones Pilot Grants may be used in any manner that assists in the fulfillment of the Math Innovation Zones Fidelity of Implementation requirements.

9. What type of data would we be expected to share from PK math for the last three years? They require quantitative and qualitative data for the last three years. We have data for 3rd and I'm sure 6th - LOTs of data in addition to STAAR but for PK we have mostly checklists. (which is developmentally appropriate)

Submissions should include any relevant data that conveys both the strengths and areas for improvement within the district or charter school network and individual schools. Data beyond STAAR results for the previous two school years may be included as a response to Attachment 2B in Section 1.1 and/or Section 2.3 and Attachment 2C in Section 3.1 or 3.3.

10. Would we be required to use a Math textbook and if so, what are the choices? (We use Motivation Math in grades 2-5) We also use Reflex and Prodigy online software systems.

The Math Innovation Zones Program does not have requirements with regard to curriculum beyond the State Approved Software Vendors.

11. If we have a single pattern feeder (PK - 8) what percentage of our students have to be participating in 8th grade algebra by the 8th grade?

Although a primary goal of Math Innovation Zones is to increase student participation and achievement in Algebra I in 8th grade, there are no requirements associated with that goal. All

feeder pattern recommendations are outlined in the Request for Letters of Interest, Attachment 1, Page 3.

12. Can we alter the suggested implementation pattern from the one that is suggested?

TEA is open to creative feeder pattern approaches to scale the changes necessary to promote student participation and achievement in Algebra I in 8th grade. If a district or open enrollment charter school chooses a feeder pattern approach that is different than the feeder pattern described in Attachment 1 of the Request for Letters of Interest, the district or charter school should justify the approach in the Letter of Interest.

13. The first requirement is “evidence of successful outcomes with blended learning within the district ...in at least one grade, within one school in any subject”. _ISD has multiple blended learning programs. One in particular is a program within the district that serves students from all four high schools. The students maintain their high school enrollment so they graduate from that school; however, they only attend ____ so in essence it is their school. This program is 100% blended learning. I would like to submit this program as our evidence of success in blended learning.

Current Blended Learning Outcomes within the school district or open enrollment charter school in programs similar to the ones supported by Math Innovation Zones are critical to Math Innovation Zones because of the lessons learned in the district or charter in prior implementations of similar Blended Learning Programs. This knowledge will be leveraged in the design, implementation, and execution of Math Innovation Zones. Letters of Interest for Math Innovation Zones should describe any current blended learning programs active in the district or charter school that will support the implementation of Math Innovation Zones.

14. We are a Community Eligibility Program (CEP) district and are 100% free and reduced. However, the percentage of economically disadvantaged students, which all qualify for free meals according to the TAPR and percentage of eligible for free and/or reduced meals, which only includes those directly certified according to PEIMS snapshot are different. The question is which percentage to utilize for the LOI.

Letters of Interest for Math Innovation Zones Pilot Grants should include the percent of students at each proposed campus eligible for free or reduced-price lunch according to the most recent **Texas Academic Performance Reports (TAPR)**.

15. Our district opened two campuses with grades 6 and 7 in 2016; we have data from the 2016-17 school year and other standardized testing data that shows our students performance but no data from 2015-16. Attachment 2 A requires data to be entered specific to 2015-16 and 2016-17. May we enter N/A in the 2015-16 box and attach an explanation without being rejected outright for not having that data entered electronically in the box?

If a school district or open-enrollment charter school lacks the requested data (i.e. STAAR results), please respond with N/A and provide additional context in the provided section of the form.

16. Due to excellent results on STAAR assessments and other data we achieved with our high populations of at-risk, Econ. Dis. and First Generation college going minority students, TEA granted an expansion amendment so we are able to begin serving K-5 students August 2018. Our ROI proposal would include the K and 3rd grade students from this campus as well as the 6th grade students from our other campuses. Is this model permissible?

The proposed feeder pattern is in accordance with the feeder pattern recommendations described in Attachment 1 of the Request for Letters of Interest.

17. We have been studying the information on Math Innovation Zones and have a question about how an ESC might help. Could the Project Manager be an ESC employee?

The goal of Math Innovation Zones is to expand high quality blended learning models in a sustainable manner throughout school districts in Texas. We realize that, for some districts including remote rural school districts, initiating and sustaining high quality blended learning models may be more effectively executed if the district or open enrollment charter is able to increase its capacity by obtaining the support of an Educational Service Center(ESC). In this and similar situations, the proposed project manager for Math Innovation Zones **may be** an employee of an ESC, if the following stipulations are met:

Grant applicant must include specific context outlining why an ESC staff member as Project Manager is best suited to effectively scale high quality blended learning models. This answer should be included in Attachment 2B of the Request for Letters of Interest.

If an ESC participates in Math Innovation Zones as project manager, that ESC will be ineligible for the Response For Qualifications for the Math Innovation Zones Technical Assistance Network. For example, if an ESC is acting as a MIZ project manager, the grant applicant would not be able to select that same ESC as a Design and Implementation Support Technical Assistance Provider.

18. Very excited to be applying for the Math Innovation Zones grant, but I would like to see if there are any resources for anyone who has very little experience with grant writing. Is there a site or resource that can provide support writing our letter of interest?

From school districts and open enrollment charter schools, TEA is solely interested in the content of the responses to the questions presented in Attachments 2A, 2B, and 2C. Although many grant writing resources exist online, TEA does not maintain a list of resources.

19. Are we allowed to have two middle schools in one feeder pattern?

Please represent different middle schools as different feeder patterns for the purposes of the Letter of Interest. If this is not possible, please provide additional context within Attachment 2A or as a separate attachment to the Letter of Interest. Multiple feeder patterns should be represented with separate worksheets within the Letter of Interest District Information Form (Attachment 2A).

20. I have a question regarding the MIZ Pilots grant: must the district spend its awarded funding within the 18/19 school year? Or can funding be used in the subsequent three years (19/20 – 21/22) to fund software licenses, hardware, updating infrastructure, personnel, etc. as the program expands to multiple grade levels?

Funding awarded as a result of this Request for Letters of Interest for Math Innovation Zones Pilot Grants must be exhausted by **8/31/2020**. Funding awarded as Math Innovation Zones Round 2 Grants from the fulfillment of the Fidelity of Implementation requirements must be exhausted by **5/31/2021**.

21. What are the specific usage / progress / mastery metrics that students will have to meet for each program?

TEA is currently working with each software vendor to determine the specific usage/progress/mastery metrics that students must meet for the program. Districts and charters will have access to this information before making software related decisions.

22. The Supports which are outlined in the LOI include 1. Design and Implementation, 2. Budget and Financial planning, 3. Professional Development support, 4. Technology Infrastructure support, and 5. Rostering Support & Data Monitoring. Could you please elaborate on each of these different supports and what they might look like?

The supports outlined in the Request for Letters of Interest are further described in Attachment 3: Detailed Technical Assistance Overview of the document.

23. Can you please elaborate on how schools at or above a 75% pass rate on STAAR will be prioritized, or what impact being in the 69-74% pass rate range will have on the evaluation of the application?

Although TEA will prioritize campuses where at least 75% of students are Approaching Grade Level or above on 3rd-8th grade STAAR results, Letters of Interest will be evaluated on the complete bundle proposed to become a Math Innovation Zone.

24. For the 50% staff allocation, does it have to be a campus person or can it be a district person who spends 50% of their time at the campus(es)?

The Dedicated Project Manager for Math Innovation Zones must dedicate at least 50% of his or her time to supporting **all** sites involved in the Math Innovation Zone initiative throughout the district or open enrollment charter school. This person will be the main point of contact for TEA staff.

25. We have 4 or more elementary campuses that feed into each middle school in our district. Would all elementary campuses that feed the one middle school have to implement the pilot or can one elementary that feeds to the middle school implement the pilot?

Although there is no minimum amount of feeder schools, Math Innovation Zones seeks to promote student participation and achievement in Algebra I in 8th grade. If a district or open enrollment charter school chooses a feeder pattern approach that is different than the feeder

pattern described in Attachment 1 of the Request for Letters of Interest, the district or charter school should justify the approach in the Letter of Interest.

26. What are the state approved blended math products? Do you have some idea the costs of these programs? Are they priced for a campus or by student and approximately how much?

The state approved software vendors for Math Innovation Zones are: Reasoning Mind, ST Math, IXL Math, and Imagine Math. Each vendor presents unique pricing and licensing models. TEA and the Design and Implementation Support Provider will work with Schools, Districts, and/or Open-Enrollment Charter Schools to determine the best match given fit and cost considerations.

27. We have some 8th grade math students taking Algebra 1. Should they also be included in the pilot?

TEA is open to creative feeder pattern approaches to scale the changes necessary to promote student participation and achievement in Algebra I in 8th grade. If a district or open enrollment charter school chooses a feeder pattern approach that is different than the feeder pattern described in Attachment 1 of the Request for Letters of Interest, the district or charter school should justify the approach in the Letter of Interest.

28. The Phase 0 Criteria include a current blended learning outcome report. While we have some blended learning, should we even submit a LOI if we do not have a full grade level within one school?

Current Blended Learning Outcomes within the school district or open enrollment charter school at any level of implementation are critical to Math Innovation Zones because of the lessons learned within the district or charter in prior implementations of similar Blended Learning Programs. This knowledge will be leveraged in the design, implementation, and execution of Math Innovation Zones. Letters of Interest for Math Innovation Zones should describe of current blended learning programs active in the district or charter school that will support the implementation of Math Innovation Zones.

29. What percentage of free reduced lunch students is considered high?

Although TEA will prioritize **campuses** serving a high number of students eligible to receive **free or reduced-price meals** under the National School Lunch and Child Nutrition Program for Math Innovation Zones, TEA does not have a threshold for what is considered a “high” percentage of students eligible for free or reduced lunch.

30. Can grants funds be used to pay for the required 50% Project Manager?

Funds from the Math Innovation Zones Pilot Grants may be used in any manner that assists in the fulfillment of the Math Innovation Zones Fidelity of Implementation requirements including personnel costs.

31. Do you have to include all schools within a feeder patter, or just selects schools within a feeder pattern?

Math Innovation Zones seeks to promote student participation and achievement in Algebra I in 8th grade. A district may choose to include all schools in a feeder pattern for Math Innovation Zones or to include only select schools in a feeder pattern for Math Innovation Zones. If an applicant chooses a feeder pattern approach that is different than the feeder pattern described in Attachment 1 of the Request for Letters of Interest, it should justify the approach in the Letter of Interest.

32. What happens if we are unable to support, due to unforeseen constraints in our budget, the technology required in year three?

Math Innovation Zones seeks to partner with districts and charter schools looking to make blended learning a sustainable program for schools throughout the district. In the evaluation of Letters of Interest for Math Innovation Zone Pilot Grants, TEA will seek districts showing both a desire and an ability to sustain the programming of Math Innovation Zones beyond the life of the grant(s).

33. Will assessments be taking place during the first two years of implementation to potentially offer more funds?

Both Pilot Math Innovation Zones **and** Exploratory Math Innovation Zones will be eligible for Round 2 grants of up to \$100,000. These awards will be determined at the end of the 2018-2019 academic year and will be based on fulfilling the Fidelity of Implementation metric requirements.

34. How many districts are requesting to be considered at this time?

TEA has seen a high level of interest from school districts and open-enrollment charter schools for Math Innovation Zone Pilot Grants.

35. Due to our overall student demographics, our passing percentage on all STAAR tests is average and we do not have an extremely high percentage of economically disadvantaged students. However, many of our classrooms are not creating an environment for growth like a blended learning environment fosters. Will we still be considered if we are not a “priority” school?

All school districts and open enrollment charter schools that present a Letter of Interest will be considered for Math Innovation Zones Pilot Grants however TEA will prioritize **campuses** where at least **75%** of students are **Approaching Grade Level or Above** on 3rd – 8th grade STAAR results during the past 2 years in the **average of all subjects and grade levels**. TEA will also prioritize **campuses** serving a high number of students eligible to receive **free or reduced-price meals** under the National School Lunch and Child Nutrition Program for Math Innovation Zones.

36. If we are chosen, but our committee feels that as a district we cannot implement with fidelity due to budget constraints, can we opt out of the grant?

Math Innovation Zone Pilot Grants are designed to assist school districts and open-enrollment charter schools in the fulfillment of the Fidelity of Implementation Metrics associated with the program. If a grant recipient feels that implementing the program with a high degree of fidelity

is prohibited by budgetary constraints, the school district or charter school should work with TEA staff to determine the best plan going forward.

37. What are the job qualifications hiring the for the Project Manger? Is the Project manager required for the entire length of the grant?

A district or open enrollment charter school should either hire or assign a project manager that best meets the needs of the individual district or charter school. This individual may be a new hire or a reallocation of the capacity of a current employee. A project manager must be maintained for the life of the grant.

38. What is a “Meaningful Learning Experience” that is recommended by the grant?

Meaningful Learning Experiences (MLEs) can be a variety of professional development structures including: district or vendor-led classroom observations; 1:1 blended learning coaching sessions; meaningful workshops; and excellent school visits to high quality blended learning programs. Although MLEs may look different across campuses, all MLEs will result in a change in teacher knowledge, skill, and/or mindset.

39. Will the MIZ Campuses be required to follow their own pacing? Or will they follow the pacing of the selected math software program? Or will they be allowed to follow District pacing?

MIZ Campuses will be required to meet Fidelity of Execution Requirements in order to received Round 2 funding. As a component of Fidelity of Execution Requirements, students must progress towards individualized learning paths that will be in part determined by the software program. Although the actual metrics will depend on the state approved online curriculum vendor chosen by the district, metrics may include:

Percent of students achieving vendor recommended progress towards goals per six weeks as defined by individual learning plan

Percent of students accurately completing program-based assessments within two attempts per six weeks

40. Will MIZ Campuses be required to created their own assessments to measure growth?

All Math Innovation Zone classrooms launching blended learning programs must administer formative assessments on a quarterly (Fall, Winter, Spring) basis and send the results to TEA. The grantee may choose which formative assessment to use in fulfillment of this requirement and they may choose whether or not to create their own assessment or use one created by a third-party.

41. What is TEA’s interpretation of Blended Learning.? How is it being defined?

TEA interprets “blended learning” according to the definition established by the Clayton Christensen Institute:

The definition of blended learning is a formal education program in which a student learns:

- *at least in part through online learning, with some element of student control over time, place, path, and/or pace;*
- *at least in part in a supervised brick-and-mortar location away from home;*
- *and the modalities along each student's learning path within a course or subject are connected to provide an integrated learning experience.*

42. Grant funding only supports years 1 and 2 of implementation. However, the software our district prefers to use, ST Math, has a significantly higher upfront registration cost than continued student enrollment beyond the initial year. Are we able to use the grant funding to enroll all students in years 1 & 2?

Funds from the Math Innovation Zones Pilot Grants may be used in any manner that assists in the fulfillment of the Math Innovation Zones Fidelity of Implementation requirements.

43. The grant lays out either a PK-8 or K-8 feeder pattern that begins with PK/K, 3rd and 6th grades. Is there some flexibility in this feeder pattern (e.g. rolling out in 5th grade instead of 6th grade)?

TEA is open to creative feeder pattern approaches to scale the changes necessary to promote student participation and achievement in Algebra I in 8th grade. If a district or open enrollment charter school chooses a feeder pattern approach that is different than the feeder pattern described in Attachment 1 of the Request for Letters of Interest, the district or charter school should justify the approach in the Letter of Interest.

44. If we have four feeder schools and only two meet the 75% approaches grade level or above standard, is it best to include only those two in the LOI instead of all four schools?

Although TEA will prioritize campuses where at least 75% of students are Approaching Grade Level or above on 3rd-8th grade STAAR results **AND** campuses serving a high number of students eligible for free or reduced lunch, Letters of Interest will be evaluated on the complete bundle proposed to become a Math Innovation Zone.

45. Please clarify; what is the prompt and how many points are assigned to 9.1?

Prompt 9.1 reflects the extent to which the overall Letter of Interest is aligned with the vision of Math Innovation Zones which is outlined in Attachment 1 of the Request for Letters of Interest.