



2023-2024 Summer Career and Technical Education Grant
Letter of Interest (LOI) Application Due 11:59 p.m. CT, January 29, 2024

NOGA ID [Redacted]

Authorizing legislation **General Appropriations Act, House Bill 1, Article IX, Section 18.114(c)(v)**

This LOI application must be submitted via email to loiapplications@tea.texas.gov.

Application stamp-in date and time

The LOI application may be signed with a digital ID or it may be signed by hand. Both forms of signature are acceptable.

TEA must receive the application by **11:59 p.m. CT, January 29, 2024**.

Grant period from **March 20, 2024-September 30, 2024**

Pre-award costs permitted from **Not Permitted**

Required Attachments

- 1. Excel workbook with the grant's budget schedules (linked along with this form on the TEA Grants Opportunities page)

See the Program Guidelines for for additional attachment information.

Select Focus Area (Applicants May Select One or Both Focus Areas)

- Focus Area 1: Career and Technical Education Course
- Focus Area 2: Work-Based Learning Experiences

Amendment Number

Amendment number (For amendments only; enter N/A when completing this form to apply for grant funds): [Redacted]

Applicant Information

Organization **Merkel Independent School District** CDN **221904** ESC **14** UEI **100531383**

Address **314 Manchester Street** City **Merkel** ZIP **79536** Vendor ID **17560020525**

Primary Contact **Joseph O' Malley** Email **jomalley@merkelisd.net** Phone **325-928-5813**

Secondary Contact **Jeffrey Gilbreath** Email **jgilbreath@merkelisd.net** Phone **325-928-5813**

Certification and Incorporation

I understand that this application constitutes an offer and, if accepted by TEA or renegotiated to acceptance, will form a binding agreement. I hereby certify that the information contained in this application is, to the best of my knowledge, correct and that the organization named above has authorized me as its representative to obligate this organization in a legally binding contractual agreement. I certify that any ensuing program and activity will be conducted in accordance and compliance with all applicable federal and state laws and regulations.

I further certify my acceptance of the requirements conveyed in the following portions of the LOI application, as applicable, and that these documents are incorporated by reference as part of the LOI application and Notice of Grant Award (NOGA):

- LOI application, guidelines, and instructions
- Debarment and Suspension Certification
- General and application-specific Provisions and Assurances
- Lobbying Certification

Authorized Official Name **Joseph O' Malley** Title **Superintendent**

Email **jomalley@merkelisd.net** Phone **325-928-5813**

Signature *Joseph O Malley* Date **1/23/2023**

Shared Services Arrangements

Shared services arrangements (SSAs) are permitted for this grant. **Check the box below if applying as fiscal agent.**

- The LEA or ESC submitting this application is the fiscal agent of a planned SSA. All participating agencies will enter into a written SSA agreement describing the fiscal agent and SSA member responsibilities. All participants understand that the "Shared Services Arrangement Attachment" must be completed and signed by all SSA members, and submitted to TEA before the NOGA is issued.

Statutory/Program Assurances

The following assurances apply to this program. In order to meet the requirements of the program, the applicant must comply with these assurances.

Check each of the following boxes to indicate your compliance.

1. The applicant provides assurance that program funds will supplement (increase the level of service), and not supplant (replace) state mandates, State Board of Education rules, and activities previously conducted with state or local funds. The applicant provides assurance that state or local funds may not be decreased or diverted for other purposes merely because of the availability of these funds. The applicant provides assurance that program services and activities to be funded from this LOI will be supplementary to existing services and activities and will not be used for any services or activities required by state law, State Board of Education rules, or local policy.
2. The applicant provides assurance that the application does not contain any information that would be protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) from general release to the public.
3. The applicant provides assurance to adhere to all the Statutory and TEA Program requirements as noted in the 2023-2024 Summer Career and Technical Education Grant Program Guidelines.
4. The applicant provides assurance to adhere to all the Performance Measures, as noted in the 2023-2024 Summer Career and Technical Education Grant Program Guidelines, and shall provide to TEA, upon request, any performance data necessary to assess the success of the program.
5. The applicant provides assurance that curriculum will be appropriately aligned to regional labor market supported CTE programs of study.
6. The applicant provides assurance to provide data to TEA on student completion of courses through a special collection process run by TEA.
7. The applicant assures that any Electronic Information Resources (EIR) produced as part of this agreement will comply with the State of Texas Accessibility requirements as specified in 1 TAC 206, 1 TAC Chapter 213, Federal Section 508 standards, and the WCAG 2.0 AA Accessibility Guidelines.

Summary of Program (Focus Area 1)

Provide an overview of the program to be implemented with grant funds. Include the overall mission and specific needs of the organization. Describe how the program will address the mission and needs.

N/A

Summary of Program (Focus Area 2)

Provide an overview of the program to be implemented with grant funds. Include the overall mission and specific needs of the organization. Describe how the program will address the mission and needs.

Merkel ISD is poised to implement an impactful work-based learning program, leveraging grant funds to establish student internships. With a focus on enrolling incoming 11th & 12th-grade students, the program aims to address the unique challenges of a small town like Merkel, situated on the I-20 corridor, approximately 18 miles west of Abilene. The limited concentration of business and industry in Merkel necessitates creative solutions to offer meaningful work-based learning experiences for students. Merkel ISD's overarching mission is to engage and empower students to overcome challenges, demonstrate resilience, and achieve excellence. A key objective is to foster community and business partnerships, producing well-rounded, marketable students prepared for the workforce. The summer work-based learning program closely aligns with this mission, offering valuable experiences that enhance students' college, career, and military readiness.

Specific Needs Addressed:

1. Access to Work-Based Learning Opportunities: Grant funds will enable the creation of summer work-based learning experiences, overcoming challenges posed by travel and time limitations during the school year.
2. Connecting Students with Local Industry: By placing students as interns at local businesses and Merkel ISD locations, the program directly addresses the need to establish strong connections between students and the local industry.

Program Components:**1. Internships and Project-Based Research Coursework:**

Objective: Provide 20 Merkel ISD high school students with immersive work experiences.

Approach: Students will work as interns at local businesses and Merkel ISD locations, supplemented by weekly class sessions focusing on employability skills and Project-Based Research coursework (PEIMS Service ID# 12701500).

2. Research and Presentation Component:

Objective: Enhance critical thinking and research skills.

Approach: Students will choose an issue related to their internship industry, conducting research and presenting their findings in a formal research paper and presentation.

3. Full-Time Work Exposure:

Objective: Provide students with a realistic glimpse into full-time working conditions.

Approach: Interns will work as close to full-time as possible (32-40 hours per week), promoting a comprehensive understanding of the demands and dynamics of a full-time work schedule.

Qualifications and Experience for Key Personnel (Focus Area 1)

Outline the required qualifications and experience for primary project personnel and any external consultants projected to be involved in the implementation and delivery of the program. Include whether the position is existing or proposed.

Title and Responsibilities of Position	Required Qualifications and Experience
N/A	

Qualifications and Experience for Key Personnel (Focus Area 2)

Outline the required qualifications and experience for primary project personnel and any external consultants projected to be involved in the implementation and delivery of the program. Include whether the position is existing or proposed.

Title and Responsibilities of Position	Required Qualifications and Experience
CTE Teacher (Heather O' Malley) will serve as lead Project-Based Research Teacher and Internship supervisor (existing position)	CTE teacher with experience planning and monitoring work-based learning experiences
Internship Supervisors, will supervise student interns and communicate with the CTE Teacher as needed (existing positions at business partners)	Employees of business partners; Ability to mentor and supervise student interns
Grant Manager (Jeffrey Gilbreath) will oversee grant implementation, including activities and expenditures (existing position)	Experience implementing and monitoring state grant programs; strong understanding of school and program goals
Superintendent (Joseph O' Malley), will coordinate financial aspects of grant activities (existing position)	Experience leading district-wide programs; experience managing grant-funded programs
External Consultant (Shane Thomas) will assist with coordination of summer activities, data collection, analysis, and reporting (grant funded)	Experience coordinating/facilitating work-based learning experiences for students; experience collecting and analyzing data for state and federal grant programs

Goals, Objectives, and Strategies (Focus Area 1)

Describe the major goals/objectives of the proposed program. What activities/strategies will be implemented to meet those goals/objectives?

N/A

Goals, Objectives, and Strategies (Focus Area 2)

Describe the major goals/objectives of the proposed program. What activities/strategies will be implemented to meet those goals/objectives?

The primary goals of the proposed internship program for Merkel ISD students, funded by the grant, are to ensure successful completion of internships, attainment of Project-Based Research credit, growth in employability skills, and enhanced community engagement. Coordinating paid internships for 20 students, primarily incoming 11th-12th graders, with Merkel ISD and local business partners is the strategy to achieve these objectives. The internships, ranging from 90-120 hours, will provide hands-on experiences aligned with high-wage, in-demand career pathways, bridging the gap between academic learning and practical work experience.

To lead the course and facilitate internships, a designated CTE instructor will be appointed, collaborating with the grant manager to liaise with business partners, monitor student progress, and troubleshoot any arising issues. The program aims to integrate the internship experience seamlessly with Project-Based Research coursework, ensuring that all students pass and earn credit. Employability skills growth will be measured through the implementation of Internship Training Plans, focusing on soft skills and workplace expectations for each student.

In addition to these student-centered goals, the program has a broader objective of community engagement and partnership development. Utilizing the summer internship initiative strategically, the district aims to showcase improvements in Career and Technical Education programs, strengthen existing partnerships, and forge new connections with businesses aligned to regional high-wage, in-demand career pathways. The implementation strategies include dedicated staff leadership, with the appointed CTE instructor working collaboratively with the grant manager and providing mentorship to interns. The program will also engage CareerCraft as a technical assistance provider to support internship program design, data analysis/reporting, and the development of Internship Readiness Assessments and Training Plans. Customized training plans will guide the determination of student outcomes and growth in both technical and soft skills.

Performance and Evaluation Measures (Focus Area 1)

Describe the performance measures identified for this program which are related to student outcomes and are consistent with the purpose of the program. Include the tools used to measure performance, as well as the processes that will be used to ensure the effectiveness of project objectives and strategies.

N/A

Performance and Evaluation Measures (Focus Area 2)

Describe the performance measures identified for this program which are related to student outcomes and are consistent with the purpose of the program. Include the tools used to measure performance, as well as the processes that will be used to ensure the effectiveness of project objectives and strategies.

Merkel ISD has designed a comprehensive set of performance measures aligned with the program's purpose, focusing on student outcomes and effectiveness. Key demographics, such as grade level, race/ethnicity, economic status, and special education needs, will be collected for enrolled, participating, and completing students in the summer internship program. Additionally, the following performance measures will be monitored:

1. Business/Industry Partnerships: Tools: Documentation of partnership agreements with businesses offering work-based learning. Process: Final reporting to TEA of the list of partners engaged in the program.
2. Student Work Data: Tools: Total and average hours worked, total and average hourly earnings. Process: Compilation and reporting in the designated PEIMS submission.
3. Training Plans and Recognitions: Tools: Individualized training plans for each student, recognition of skills/growth.
4. Program Objectives: Tools: Performance metrics related to internship completion, Project-Based Research credit attainment, and employability skills growth. Process: Final reporting to TEA, with data analysis for district leadership.

Monitoring and Assessment Strategies:

1. Internship Completion and Credit Attainment: Process: Utilize formative assessments and competency-based evaluations as part of the training plan to assess students' readiness, ability, and competency in performing job-related tasks.
2. Employability Skills Growth: Process: Leverage Internship Training Plans to measure growth in both technical and soft skills over the internship duration.
3. Weekly Supervisory Meetings: Process: Internship supervisors will meet weekly with each intern to identify strengths, areas requiring support, and offer coaching.
4. Feedback from Business Partners: Process: Solicit feedback from internship supervisors at partnering businesses, including Taylor Electric, Taylor Telecom, City of Merkel, Great State Apparel, Merkel ISD Maintenance, MISD IT Dept., MISD Admin Office, Pizza Pro, Tin Cup Country Club, Dosser's Garage, Merkel Drug Store, Gettin' Stitched.

Budget Narrative (Focus Area 1)

Describe how the proposed budget will meet the needs and goals of the program, including for staffing, supplies and materials, contracts, travel, etc. If applicable, include a high-level snapshot of funds currently allocated to similar programs. Include a short narrative describing how adjustments will be made in the future to meet needs.

N/A

Budget Narrative (Focus Area 2)

Describe how the proposed budget will meet the needs and goals of the program, including for staffing, supplies and materials, contracts, travel, etc. If applicable, include a high-level snapshot of funds currently allocated to similar programs. Include a short narrative describing how adjustments will be made in the future to meet needs.

The proposed budget for Merkel ISD's summer work-based learning program is strategically designed to address the program's needs and goals, aiming to provide valuable opportunities for students during the summer months, aligning with the district's broader objective of preparing students for college, career, or the military.

Currently lacking summer work-based learning opportunities, the grant funds will enable the implementation of this program, offering students the chance to explore potential careers, gain employability skills, and prepare for future career paths. The budget prioritizes impactful allocations for staffing, supplies, and materials, with extra duty pay designated for essential roles. These roles include a lead teacher (CTE teacher), a grant manager overseeing activities and expenditures, and a payroll manager responsible for student compensation.

The proposed stipend of \$1,650 for each student intern, reflecting an estimated average of \$15 per hour, is allocated to recognize the anticipated 90-125 hours of work during the summer program. Additionally, funds are allocated for CareerCraft, a contractor assisting with internship design, data collection, analysis, and reporting. A portion of the budget covers the procurement of shirts for interns, serving as a visual identifier at their worksites. A small amount is also set aside for Other Operating Costs to address any miscellaneous expenses during the program.

To optimize resources, local funds and resources will be utilized for student transportation, while a modest allocation for indirect costs is included in the budget. Looking ahead, if the program proves successful, the district aims to identify sustainable funding sources for future summer internship programs. This budget reflects a thoughtful allocation of resources to maximize impact, and adjustments in the future will be guided by the program's evolving needs and overall effectiveness.

Program Requirements

1a. Needs Assessment (Focus Area 1): Applicants must complete a Needs Assessment Summary indicating specific area of need the LEA has that hinders the completion of courses within programs of study. (For example: describing scheduling conflicts, specific program of study teacher availability, etc.)

N/A

1b. Needs Assessment (Focus Area 2): Applicants must complete a Needs Assessment Summary indicating specific area of needs the LEA has to offer work-based learning opportunities. (For example: describing transportation limitations, describing scheduling conflicts, specific program of study teacher availability, etc.)

Through this grant funding, Merkel ISD aims to address specific challenges hindering the provision of work-based learning opportunities for students, particularly during the traditional school year. Notably, scheduling constraints and various obligations prevent many students, especially those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds (55%) and those receiving special education services (18%), from participating in meaningful student internships. The grant program is crucial in filling this gap, offering high-quality internships that would otherwise be inaccessible.

Merkel ISD recognizes the importance of providing students with a full-time internship experience of 32-40 hours a week, immersing them in the demands of full-time work. This intensive schedule is challenging to implement during the regular school year due to limited availability in students' schedules and the competing demands of academic, elective, and extracurricular commitments. The summer internship program emerges as a solution, allowing students to focus solely on their internship placements without the distractions of competing priorities, ensuring a more enriching learning experience.

Moreover, teacher availability is a notable constraint during the school year. As a small, rural school district with a 4-day instructional week, teachers' schedules are stretched, limiting their time for instruction. The summer program provides a unique opportunity for one of our CTE teachers to dedicate focused time and attention to the program and course, promising a more impactful and meaningful experience for students. This grant addresses critical needs, making work-based learning accessible and enhancing the overall educational experience for Merkel ISD students.

Program Requirements, cont'd.

2. **Focus Area 1:** Applicants must specify which program(s) of study and the CTE course(s) in the program(s) of study that will be offered (see <https://tea.texas.gov/academics/college-career-and-military-prep/career-and-technical-education/cte-programs-of-study> for a list of the approved statewide programs of study). Include the number of students who be engaged and supported in this focus area.

N/A

3. **Focus Area 2:** Applicants must specify business and industry partners who will be involved in the program. Additionally, specify the work-based learning model(s) which will be utilized and the number of students who will be engaged and supported.

Merkel ISD's proposed summer program will leverage paid internships as the primary work-based learning model, engaging 20 students, primarily incoming 11th and 12th graders, from Merkel ISD. Complementing their internships, students will enroll in a summer Project-Based Research course (PEIMS Service ID# 12701500), meeting weekly to discuss employability skills and complete coursework related to their internship experiences. In this setting, students will delve into industry-specific issues, conduct research, and present findings, enhancing their understanding of the chosen field.

To ensure a structured learning experience, customized internship training plans will be developed and utilized, providing scaffolded opportunities for skill development and documenting competency in assigned tasks. Merkel ISD is working to secure partnerships with various business entities, including Taylor Electric, Taylor Telecom, City of Merkel, Great State Apparel, Merkel ISD Maintenance, MISD IT Dept., MISD Admin Office, Pizza Pro, Tin Cup Country Club, Dosser's Garage, Merkel Drug Store, and Gettin' Stitched. These partnerships align with high-wage, in-demand industries and career pathways in the region, particularly within Merkel ISD's CTE programs, encompassing Design and Multimedia Arts, Early Learning, Teaching and Training, Carpentry, and Family and Community Service.

The program's goal is to equip students with employability skills, offering practical insights into career possibilities while fostering an understanding of workplace responsibilities. By immersing students in these experiences, Merkel ISD aims to prepare them for successful, long-term employment and instill awareness of diverse career trajectories.

Appendix I: Amendment Description and Purpose (leave this section blank when completing the Initial application for funding)

An amendment must be submitted when the program plan or budget is altered for the reasons described in the "When to Amend the Application" document posted on the [Administering a Grant](#) page. The following are required to be submitted for an amendment: (1) Page 1 of the application with updated contact information and current authorized official's signature and date, (2) Appendix I with changes identified and described, (3) all updated sections of the application or budget affected by the changes identified below, and, if applicable, (4) Amended Budget Request. Amendment Instructions with more details can be found on the last tab of the budget template.

You may duplicate this page

Amended Section

Reason for Amendment