



**2024-2025 Texas Legal Framework
Letter of Interest (LOI) Application Due 11:59 p.m. CT, October 2, 2023**

NOGA ID [Redacted]

Authorizing legislation [Redacted]

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

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, October 2, 2023**.

Application stamp-in date and time

Grant period from **July 8, 2024 - August 31, 2025**

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

Required Attachments

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

(List any attachments required to be submitted with this application - limited to 10 pages)

The budget schedule was included as an attachment, in the email used to submit this grant.

Amendment Number

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

Applicant Information

Organization **Region 18 ESC** CDN **165950** Campus [Redacted] ESC **18** UEI **REE9JFEJK163**

Address **PO Box 60580** City **Midland** ZIP **79711** Vendor ID **1751247814**

Primary Contact **Amanda A. Magallan** Email **amanda.magallan@esc18.net** Phone **432-561-4308**

Secondary Contact **Britt Hayes** Email **bhayes@esc18.net** Phone **432-567-3213**

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 **Dr. Dewitt Smith** Title **Executive Director**

Email **dsmith@esc18.net** Phone **432-563-2380**

Signature  Date **9-27-2023**

Shared Services Arrangements Shared services arrangements (SSAs) are NOT permitted for this grant.**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 agrees to all Provisions and Assurances as detailed on pp. 6-7 of the *2024-2025 Texas Legal Framework Program Guidelines* available on the [TEA Grant Opportunities](#) grant-specific page.

Statutory/Program Requirements

1. Qualifications and Experience of Key Personnel: Partner with TEA to support the scope of work in this grant by employing a team of professionals who have a minimum of 5 years of experience in website management. Provide a description of the qualifications key personnel in your organization have to fulfill the requirements of this grant and indicate how you will recruit and maintain qualified candidates if needed.

The Texas Legal Framework team has enjoyed a professional partnership with TEA regarding the ongoing management of the website since its inception in 2004. The present key personnel have worked on the framework for a combined total of 25 years and offer comprehensive insight into the design and operation of the website from their historical advantage. This long-term experience assists with maintaining consistency with TEA's mission and helps ensure the intended outcomes.

Qualifications and experience of IT staff and key personnel include over 20 years of project and website management working side-by-side with the same trusted programmers, who understand the various nuances of the website. This long-standing collaboration makes maintaining, modifying, and updating the system as seamless as possible. Additionally, the in-house IT department is fully trained and offers support and collaboration whenever necessary. The creation of the new web design and the transition from the former web system to the new Drupal system, was a model example of multiple entities (TEA, ESC key personnel, ESC IT department, and the programmers) demonstrating strong communication and collaboration skills to complete the task.

The grant director has 15 years of experience in project management and budgeting to provide support for the operational activities of this grant. Key personnel have a minimum of five years' experience with the project. Other consultants are regularly trained and assist with tasks when necessary, ensuring a continuous pool of qualified personnel.

If additional personnel are needed, a job description has been developed and hiring will occur by June 30 of each year. Minimum candidate qualifications include a Master's degree with special education and software application experience; assist the team and programmers with design and improvement reviews of the authoring system; support the development, organization, and facilitation of training materials and activities concerning demonstrations and/or updates on the use of and application of the website; and develop/monitor/maintain digital and manual archival research, recordings, processing, and databases of products. The interview process includes specific questions and scenarios to evaluate potential candidates.

Essential functions of the team are to research, maintain, and codify legislative and rule updates as they occur. The team demonstrates meticulous editing, precise proofreading, and syntax construction for functionality, focused content, and consistency adherence and uniformity within the website while following the TEA Brand Book guidelines.

The team serves as a point of contact for the Legal Framework authoring system account applications and assistance, as well as public use and navigation questions that may arise. With over 30 years of special education experience, the team has a thorough understanding of the importance and integrity of the information made available on the website.

Each year sealed bids are solicited for Requests for Proposals from outside vendors for the purpose of enhancing and maintaining the programming aspects of the website for the period of September 1 through August 31. A rubric has been developed to match the requirements of the grant to determine who receives the accepted bid. Four weeks are allotted for the bidding process to be completed, after which the awarded vendor is notified.

Translation is provided by a team who have experience and education levels worthy of a state project from a Ph.D. to 20+ years in the field. The translators use their skills and expertise to create the Spanish version of the frameworks, glossary, and documents.

Changes to the frameworks happen only after legal consultation and TEA approval. The contracted attorneys are highly reputable and distinguished in their field.

Statutory/Program Requirements

2. **Budget:** The costs detailed in the budget should demonstrate an exceptional plan inclusive of all aspects of the program, including personnel, materials, and ongoing support. Additionally, the plan should detail how the program will utilize existing resources and systems. The budget should also address cost considerations for contingency plans. **Provide a description of how you will ensure funds are used with fidelity utilizing existing resources and systems and addresses cost considerations for contingency plans.**

The success of this program is evidenced by the collaboration between TEA and the entities required to fulfill the grant requirements. The Legal Framework team is focused on utilizing existing resources to fulfill the needs of the grant and carefully addressing costs. It is understood that the fidelity of the grant will not be compromised.

The grant award will be used in conjunction with existing resources and systems to address contingency plans. For example, if there is a need to add personnel or change legal firms or programmers, the funds will be used under the supervision of the chief financial officer and grant supervisor.

The budget includes funds for legal services, programming, and translation for professional and contracted services. It also includes payroll expenses for 3.5 FTEs as well as supplies and materials used in the framework process.

Each year the programming aspect of the Legal Framework website is put out for bid. The entity that receives the highest rubric score is awarded the bid. Legal services are provided by a well-known firm at fair market value or lower. The framework is translated into Spanish except for the Side-by-Side and the citations, hence the need for translators.

Addressing the varied aspects of the website requires a collaborative approach. The Legal Framework team is trained to answer questions from the public (parents, educators, or advocates) whether by phone or by email. The team consists of experienced special education personnel that are the best our region has to offer.

With 20 years of budgeting experience for the Legal Framework project, this budget is concise and specific.

Description	Amount
Payroll Costs 6100 (From Activities)	407,000
Payroll Costs 6100 (Other)	0
Professional and Contracted Services 6200	187,586
Supplies and Materials 6300	4,500
Other Operating Costs 6400	0
Total	599,086

Professional Position(s)	Percent of time funded on this project*
Researcher	.90 (one person at 90%)
Consultant	.80 (one person at 50% and one person at 30%)
Coordinator	.60 (one person at 60%)
Technical Specialist(s)	1.20 (one person at 60% and one person at 60%)

*The percentage of time funded directly corresponds to the amount of time spent working on this grant and activities. The amounts shown are inclusive of all aspects of the program—personnel, materials, and ongoing support.

Statutory/Program Requirements (Cont.)

3. **Plan for training, resource maintenance and website management:** The proposal outlines a plan for continuing or updating training and resource maintenance and development for the Legal Framework website, addressing any gaps in knowledge and evidence of past success.

Since the inception of the website in 2004, the Legal Framework team has worked diligently to ensure its accuracy and relevancy. In the early years, the website was used to house newly developed ARD forms in English and Spanish. Additionally, the website was used to store state and federal requirements of special education by topic as a companion to the voluminous Side-by-Side document. As the website evolved, the response from stakeholders statewide has been overwhelmingly positive. It has proven to be an invaluable resource that LEAs, advocates, and parents utilize to assist with the acquisition and understanding of information as it pertains to children with disabilities.

The team has a plan for ongoing training, resource maintenance, and website/authoring system management. Paramount importance is placed on frequent and ongoing communication with TEA, the programmers, and the in-house IT staff. There are weekly zoom meetings with TEA and bi-weekly meetings with the programmers and TEA. In addition, contact with the programmers varies with questions/needs that arise and communication often occurs several times a week. The in-house IT department is always available for support when needed. Additionally, there is continual collaboration with TEA in the development of new operating procedure templates and assurance statements, as well as subsequent training to LEAs regarding the use of any new templates or assurances. Other trainings are scheduled as TEA requests them. Website improvements for the process of uploading/linking of policies and operating procedures, as well as completing assurance statements routinely occur. As TEA provides guidance in these areas, the framework team stays in close contact with the programmers to ensure swift updating of the website as needed.

There is an annual Trainer-of-Trainers for Texas Legal Framework regional contacts from the 20 ESCs. This is a highly successful training course that ensures the contacts are fully equipped to train special education directors across the state in all areas of the website. With access to the authoring system, LF contacts are trained to assist with setting up an account, uploading/linking policies and operating procedures, completing assurance statements, and generating LEA reports to assist with compliance.

At the end of each legislative session, the Legal Framework team collaborates with TEA and the legal team to update the frameworks section and any other documents impacted by legislative change. The attorneys advise the team of legal recommendations. Changes to the website involve a detailed, multi-person process of proofing and editing to ensure accuracy. TEA has final approval of all changes.

The Legal Framework team places high priority on maintaining an accurate website and to quickly problem solve when issues arise. Any gaps in knowledge are immediately addressed and resolved when the programmers are notified.

Statutory/Program Requirements

4. **Outreach:** The proposal includes how the applicant will partner with TEA to increase outreach across the state. Provide a description of potential outreach plans that have worked for you in the past. Explain how these plans can be generalized across the entire state of Texas and identify any barriers you foresee.

A primary goal for the team is to partner with TEA to increase outreach by developing mini-training modules that will be disseminated throughout the state utilizing the expertise of Statewide Technical Assistance Network members, Special Education Support Liaisons, and regional ESC contacts. The training modules can be incorporated into statewide trainings with the goal of promoting the value of the Texas Legal Framework website while safeguarding a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment for students with disabilities. A system will be developed to record evidence to TEA that these trainings are being provided. Target audiences will include district and campus administrators; teachers, parents, and advocates; and participants in educator preparation programs.

Developing training and providing strategies for the purpose of reaching and teaching stakeholders about state and federal laws and regulations that impact special education is a primary goal of the project. Additionally, the team is proficient in providing and promoting website resources regarding obligations and rights for the provision of free appropriate public education.

The Legal Framework team works diligently to overcome barriers as special education continues to change and evolve over time. These challenges motivate the team to utilize resources to develop new ideas and concepts to keep the website fresh and relevant. One potential barrier to overcome might include the tracking of Legal Framework trainings. The team will develop a system with TEA to identify the number of statewide trainings held and the number and type of participants in attendance to measure the scope of reach of the website. Furthermore, expectations for ESC LF contacts will be delineated. The assistance that ESC LF contacts give to LEAs within their region is vital. With the continued support of TEA and attendance at the annual TOT, responsibilities, and expectations of regional LF contacts will be more successfully understood and implemented across the state.

Numerous outreach plans for sharing information on the website have been successfully implemented in the past. The annual Trainer of Trainers provided for the ESC LF contacts and regional special education directors is essential to pass on vital information to key partners across the state. Other outreach planning includes statewide training provided to parent groups, agencies, and state network conferences on the use of the Texas Legal Framework website. Closer to home, training is required in local special education workshops on the website that includes legal requirements, valuable resources, and obligations to provide a free appropriate public education. Lastly, the website has built-in tools for the purpose of outreach. Three tabs are located on the bottom of the homepage: Stay Informed, Inform Us, and Help Desk. Stay Informed allows the user to receive updates on important changes or additions to the website. Inform Us gives immediate feedback on the practical application of the website and allows for suggestions for improvement. The Help Desk gives the user an immediate option to email or call for assistance. The team values these outreach tools and utilizes the input to consider how the website and LF services can be enhanced.

Statutory/Program Requirements

5. **Additional Requirements:** Describe any experience in collecting, analyzing and reporting on performance data, providing technical assistance to ESCs, and LEAs. Quality control of deliverables and past experience creating public-facing resources. Provide a description of your experience with activities similar to the additional requirements of this grant, including how to navigate emerging needs of the field within the parameters of the grant.

This statewide project enhances the accessibility of important information regarding special education laws for the state of Texas. Additionally, the features of the authoring system allow LEAs to attach state required policies and operating procedures and complete assurance statements.

Each year there is the task of updating and enhancing the website to make the site more relevant and user-friendly. An annual needs assessment is sent out, results are considered, and findings are submitted as required. The most recent example of collecting, analyzing, and reporting on performance data was through the Legal Framework Needs Assessment given to the Special Education Support Liaisons. This assessment yielded information on frequency of use, areas of use, opinions on the new website design, login accessibility, ease of finding needed information, and how to make the website more user friendly. The data was very useful. All submissions were acknowledged, and questions were answered. The LF team took suggestions to the programmers for consideration.

The most visible project tasks are updating the frameworks and the publications. When a legislative change occurs, whether federal or state, updates are made. Timelines are critical and every effort is made to meet them. As with all public resources available on the website, quality control is at the forefront. A multi-person, fact-checking, proofing/editing process is in place to ensure accuracy of the publications while ensuring Section 508 compliance. All resources meet accessibility requirements as the team was trained by TEA in this process.

There are two distinct sides to the website, the public side, and the authoring system. On the public side of the website, the user can find a warehouse of published frameworks, important documents, as well as the policies and operating procedures from every LEA in the state. Public-facing resources currently available on the website include the Notice of Procedural Safeguards; Parent's Guide to the ARD Process; Special Education Rules and Regulations; IEP Model Form and Guidance; Timeline Decision Tree; and Transfer of Rights Model Form.

The authoring system requires an administrator login. There are several different types of accounts—School Administrators, ESC administrators, Translator Administrators, and TEA Administrators. Each of these requires approval from the ESC LF contact and the Legal Framework team. The 20 ESC LF contacts keep a current list of their special education directors; and the framework team updates the contacts list by region as they are approved. It is in the authoring system where the users (ESC staff and special education directors) can complete TEA required policies, operating procedures, and assurances. Additionally, an administrator can access important templates, training materials such as one-pagers, power points, and TEA correspondence.

The following resources are housed in the Resource Library within the authoring system:

How To: Power points that inform the user in a step-by-step approach on how to set up an administrator account, upload/link policies and operating procedures, complete assurance statements, and how to generate a report;

Informational Items: One-pagers, flowcharts, and other items with additional information regarding compliance with policies, operating procedures, and assurance statements;

Communications: TAA letters detailing requirements of LEAs in compliance matters; and

Activities: Starters, games, and questionnaires to facilitate the use and familiarity of the website.

Providing technical assistance to ESCs and LEAs is something the LF team does daily. Reports are run in compliance with the Required Activities Description (RAD) and whenever TEA requests them, such as when due dates are nearing. The reports show those with incomplete policies, operating procedures, or assurance statements. The ever-changing status of administrators within charter schools and districts across the state ensures the LF team is actively assisting with compliance questions. In addition, a priority is established to ensure every LEA has an active Legal Framework account, thereby, all new applications are verified and approved as quickly as possible.

Equitable Access and Participation

Check the appropriate box below to indicate whether any barriers exist to equitable access and participation for any groups that receive services funded by this program.

- The applicant assures that no barriers exist to equitable access and participation for any groups receiving services funded by this program.
- Barriers exist to equitable access and participation for the following groups receiving services funded by this grant, as described below.

Group	<input type="text"/>	Barrier	<input type="text"/>
Group	<input type="text"/>	Barrier	<input type="text"/>
Group	<input type="text"/>	Barrier	<input type="text"/>
Group	<input type="text"/>	Barrier	<input type="text"/>

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