2024-2026 Interactive Online Learning Grant, Cycle 1
Informal Discretionary Competition (IDC) Due 11:59 p.m. CT, April 4th, 2024

TEA Texas Education Agency ®

NOGA ID

Authorizing legislation	**General Appropriations Act, Article III, Rider 90, 88th Texas Legislature**

This IDC application must be submitted via email to **competitivegrants@tea.texas.gov.**

The IDC 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, April 4th, 2024**.

Application stamp-in date and time

Grant period from	**May 17th, 2024 to April 30th, 2026**

Pre-award costs are not permitted for this grant program.

Required Attachments

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

Amendment Number

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

Applicant Information

Organization	Horizon Montessori	CDN	108-802	Campus	MS	ESC	01	UEI	DSJKX6F1Q749

Address	2402 East Business Highway 83	City	Weslaco	ZIP	78596	Vendor ID	74-2859107

Primary Contact	Ms. Yolanda Cantu	Email	yolanda.cantu@hmps.net	Phone	956-969-3092

Secondary Contact	Dr. Andre Credit	Email	andre.credit@hmps.net	Phone	956-969-3092

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 IDC application, as applicable, and that these documents are incorporated by reference as part of the IDC application and Notice of Grant Award (NOGA):

[X] IDC application, guidelines, and instructions

[X] General and application-specific Provisions and Assurances

[X] Debarment and Suspension Certification

[X] Lobbying Certification

Authorized Official Name	Ms. Yolanda Cantu	Title	Assistant Superintendent

Email	yolanda.cantu@hmps.net	Phone	956-969-3092

Signature	*Yolanda Cantu* (DocuSigned by) F943E3BD48AC41A...	Date	4/3/2024

Shared Services Arrangements

X Shared services arrangements (SSAs) are not permitted for this grant program.

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 IDC 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 2024-2026 Interactive Online Learning Grant, Cycle 1 Program Guidelines.

☒ 4. The applicant provides assurance to adhere to all the Performance Measures, as noted in the 2024-2026 Interactive Online Learning Grant, Cycle 1 Program Guidelines, and shall provide to TEA, upon request, any performance data necessary to assess the success of the program.

☒ 5. 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 Texas Administrative Code (TAC) Chapter 206, 1 TAC Chapter 213, Federal Section 508 standards, and the WCAG 2.0 AA Accessibility Guidelines.

☒ 6. The applicant provides assurances to select or develop an effective interactive online learning model(s) that meets the statutory requirements listed in General Appropriations Act, House Bill 1, Article III, Rider 90, 88th Legislative Session Regular Session, 2023.

☒ 7. The applicant provides assurances that program funds will be used to implement with fidelity an effective interactive online learning model(s) in middle school and/or high school for cross-curricular instruction in English language arts and U.S. history and/or Texas History. The effective interactive online learning model(s) must: align with Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for middle school and/or high school U.S. history, Texas history, and English language arts, as applicable; include tools to monitor the progress of each individual student; include quarterly benchmark assessments that are automatically scored; include both audio narration and video components; and be offered for use in both English and Spanish.

☒ 8. The applicant provides assurances that the implemented interactive online learning model(s) must include cross-curricular instruction in social studies and English language arts aligned to the TEKS.

☒ 9. The applicant provides assurances that the interactive online learning model(s) has been reviewed and determined to comply with the requirements of the Texas Education Code (TEC) §28.002(h) and §28.0022.

☒ 10. The applicant provides assurances that the teachers implementing the interactive online learning model(s) will receive adequate professional development to ensure successful implementation of the program.

☒ 11. The applicant provides assurances to support student learning in the interactive online learning model(s).

☒ 12. The applicant provides assurances to provide the necessary support to help students accelerate in the learning model(s) if they fall behind or are failing in the cross-curricular learning model(s).

☒ 13. The applicant provides assurances to make a sustainability plan to ensure that the interactive online learning model(s) can continue to be offered after the grant ends.

☒ 14. The applicant provides assurances to provide a status report by August 1, 2025, and a final report by February 1, 2026.

Statutory Requirements

1. Describe the process the local education agency (LEA) will use for choosing/developing an effective interactive online learning model(s) that aligns with the TEKS in middle school and high school for instruction in U.S. history and/or Texas history and English language arts, including a description of the program, grade levels at which the program will be implemented, the selection/development criteria, and how the LEA will ensure TEKS alignment.

Horizon Montessori will prioritize the implementation of effective interactive online learning models for middle school students. To achieve this, the charter has identified a robust process for selecting and/or developing optimal interactive learning models. This process will result in a program aligning with state standards such as TEKS, while also prioritizing personalized learning experiences that empower students to take control of their educational paths. These models will not only remove obstacles and cultivate a more engaging learning atmosphere for all students but, most importantly, they will offer substantial support to those most in need, including students currently at risk of academic setbacks (60.3%) and facing economic hardships (71.8%).

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM, GRADE LEVELS AT WHICH THE PROGRAM WILL BE IMPLEMENTED, THE SELECTION/DEVELOPMENT CRITERIA, AND HOW THE LEA WILL ENSURE TEKS ALIGNMENT: The charter learning model will consist of interactive software tailored for middle school students (grade levels). To choose the appropriate software, the charter will conduct a comprehensive assessment of student requirements in U.S. history, Texas history, and English Language Arts (ELA). This will be followed by the establishment of precise objectives, considering academic standards, student engagement, and accessibility. Our methodology involves evaluating existing online models and platforms such as the Texas Virtual School Network (TXVSN) and TxLx to ensure alignment with TEKS academic standards and integration of interactive features. Additionally, the selected model will:
• Include tools for monitoring the progress of each individual student.
• Integrate quarterly benchmark assessments that are automatically scored.
• Offer both audio narration and video components.
• Be available for use in both English and Spanish.
This comprehensive plan is designed to enrich educational experiences while maintaining alignment with curriculum standards and ensuring accessibility for all students.

2. Describe the progress monitoring tool(s) included with the interactive online learning model(s) and how the LEA will use the monitoring tool(s) to ensure adequate student progress. Include how the LEA will use the progress monitoring tool(s) to support struggling learners and students who may be off track. What interventions will be implemented to help struggling learners?

DESCRIPTION OF PROGRESS MONITORING TOOL(S): Horizon Montessori has decided on the following Progress Monitoring Tools to monitor progress for the program: 1) Assessments and Quizzes: Regular assessments embedded within the online learning platform to help track student understanding of content. These will be formative (during instruction) or summative (end-of-unit). 2) Learning Analytics Dashboard: The platform will provide real-time data on student engagement, completion rates, time spent on tasks, and performance. Teachers and administrators will be able to monitor this dashboard. 3) Student Portfolios: Students will compile their work, reflections, and achievements in digital portfolios. Teachers will review these to assess growth over time. 4) Automated Alerts: The online system chosen should help us generate alerts when students fall behind, miss assignments, or struggle. Teachers will receive notifications to intervene promptly.
HOW THE LEA WILL USE PROGRESS MONITORING TO SUPPORT LEARNERS AND TRACK SUCCESS: Through the integration of these progress monitoring tools, the charter aims to evaluate the efficacy of its learning models in improving learning outcomes and pinpointing enduring learning obstacles among struggling students. Horizon Charter will employ: 1) Assessments and Quizzes: that will monitor student success by desegregating the data provided through the automatic results further analyzing the challenging areas. 2) Learning Analytics Dashboard: that will ensure effectiveness of daily instruction by verifying students' comprehension of the material by providing quantitative data. 3) Student Portfolios: that will showcase the students' understanding of the curriculum and their growth over time. 4) Automated Alerts: that will intervene when students show signs of struggle.

INTERVENTIONS WILL BE IMPLEMENTED TO HELP STRUGGLING LEARNERS: The district will utilize its standard tiered intervention approach. The Three-Tiered Approach is as follows:
Tier 1 (Universal): All students receive quality instruction. Teachers monitor progress.
Tier 2 (Targeted): Struggling learners receive additional support. This could include small-group sessions, peer tutoring, or adaptive content.
Tier 3 (Intensive): Intensive interventions for students who are significantly off track. Individualized plans are created.

Statutory Requirements (Cont'd)

3. Describe the quarterly benchmarks included in the interactive online learning model(s) and how the school(s) will use this data to support student learning and to evaluate the effectiveness of the interactive online learning model(s) that was implemented.

DESCRIPTION OF QUARTERLY BENCHMARK(S): Horizon Montessori has identified the following quarterly benchmarks for online learning models: 1) Skill-Based Benchmarks - Which will be designed to evaluate students' knowledge and skills, with a focus on critical thinking, problem solving, writing, and analysis; 2) Academic Achievement Benchmarks - Which will focus on assessing the fluency of participating students in content areas within their chosen subjects; 3) Growth Benchmarks - Which will measure student's academic growth over time; 4) STAAR-Style Benchmarks - Which will prepare students for real testing environment and standards.

HOW THE LEA WILL USE QUARTERLY BENCHMARK(S)TO SUPPORT STUDENT LEARNING AND TO EVALUATE THE EFFECTIVENESS: The implementation of quarterly benchmarks within the program serves a twofold purpose. Firstly, these benchmarks are carefully crafted to ready students for the state assessment at the course's culmination. Secondly, they assume a pivotal role in gauging student progress and scrutinizing the efficacy of our educational methodologies. Delivered in a diverse array of formats—including multiple-choice, short answer, open-ended, true/false questions, and oral presentations—these benchmarks are tailored to evaluate a broad spectrum of skills and knowledge domains. This strategic assessment framework ensures the charter can promptly identify struggling learners, pinpoint areas of difficulty, and enact targeted interventions to foster their academic growth and success.

4. Describe the audio and video components included in the interactive online learning model(s) and how the school(s) will use these tools to engage students in the effective interactive online learning model(s).

The charter has established its interactive online learning model to encompass both audio and video components, such as:
Enriched Audio Instruction:
• Narrated Content: Lessons come alive with engaging audio narration accompanying presentations, slides, and eBooks. This alternative to traditional text-based instruction promotes understanding and inclusivity for visual impaired learners.
• Educational Podcasts: Topical podcasts offer students the flexibility to learn on-the-go during lessons or downtime. This fosters independent learning and caters to auditory learners.
• Interactive Audio Assessments: Traditional written quizzes are replaced with engaging audio assessments.
• Interactive Activities: Pronunciation drills, listening comprehension tasks, and collaborative storytelling activities enhance student engagement and language acquisition.
Immersive Video Learning:
• Expert-Led Lectures: Recorded lectures from teachers and subject-matter experts provide students with clear explanations and in-depth knowledge on various areas.
• Animated Explanations: Complex topics are transformed into clear and captivating experiences with the power of animation, fostering improved knowledge retention.
• Virtual Field Trips: Geographical and historical limitations are bridged through virtual field trips. Immersive video footage allows students to explore museums, historical sites, and natural wonders, enriching their understanding of the world.
Engagement Strategies will include items such as:
• Discussion Prompts: After watching a video, teachers will initiate discussions. They will encourage students to share insights, ask questions, and debate.
• Interactive Quizzes within Videos: Teachers will embed quiz questions directly into video content.
• Video Annotations: Teachers will be encouraged to add text annotations or interactive elements (e.g., clickable links) to videos. These will enhance student engagement and provide good context.
This multifaceted approach will ensure that students with auditory and visual processing needs are accommodated, fostering a diverse learning environment.

Statutory Requirements (Cont'd)

5. Describe the components of the interactive online learning model(s) that are provided in Spanish. Explain how your LEA will use the interactive online learning model(s) with English- and Spanish-speaking students.

SPANISH COMPONENTS INTEGRATED INTO ONLINE LEARNING MODEL(S):   At Horizon Montessori, the charter emphasizes the adoption of a bilingual online learning model, recognizing its significance in supporting English Second Language (ESL) students. Consequently, the charter has undertaken research into a range of Spanish resources, with intentions to incorporate interactive online learning models such as the following: 1) Intermediarios: A course on Spanish/English community and legal translation and interpreting for advanced students; 2) ¡Listos!: A series of units for Heritage Spanish learners in grades 6-8th, covering personal life, college tasks, career readiness, and civic participation; 3) Spanish in Texas: Educational resources for teachers and learners of Spanish in Texas; 4) Spanish Grammar in Context: A website for learning and practicing real-world Spanish grammar; 5) Spanish Proficiency Exercises: Video clips demonstrating various language tasks by native speakers from Latin America and Spain; and 6) Duolingo: Gamified app for language practice.

HOW SPANISH COMPONENTS WILL BE USED IN THE ONLINE LEARNING MODEL(S):   By integrating these interactive online learning models, students will encounter a diverse array of instructional methods, encompassing video-based learning, animations, simulations, reading passages, and interactive puzzles or challenges presented in a gaming format. With this approach, the charter aims to elevate the academic achievements of both English- and Spanish-speaking students, while cultivating a multicultural and multilingual educational environment.

TEA Program Requirements

1. Provide an overview of how the effective interactive online learning model(s) will be implemented with grant funds. Include the overall mission, goal(s), and desired student outcomes of the implementation. Describe how this grant will help support the LEA's overall mission.

ONLINE LEARNING MODEL IMPLEMENTATION: The charter's program initiative goes beyond simply acquiring resources; it's a transformative step towards achieving our mission of exceptional, interactive learning for all students.

The grant will empower us to:
• Desired Outcomes: Funds will cover online curriculum resources, teacher professional development, and student data management systems. This will ensure that teachers are equipped to deliver engaging online experiences and provide robust support for all students, especially those at risk of falling behind.
• Goals: By establishing clear, quarterly benchmarks and swiftly acquiring necessary software and training materials, we can promptly implement the program. This translates to a more engaging learning environment for students, fostering deeper learning experiences and preparing them to thrive beyond the classroom.
• Mission: This grant aligns perfectly with our commitment to success for every student. By expanding access to online learning, we ensure all students can flourish academically. This initiative further underscores our dedication to continuous improvement and innovation in education.

Horizon Montessori believes this online learning model is a pivotal step towards achieving our mission. Our dedication lies in furnishing outstanding education for every student, enabling them to reach their utmost potential. This grant serves as a catalyst, transforming our vision into tangible reality.

TEA Program Requirements (Cont'd)

2. Specify three student needs that would be met by the interactive online learning grant and describe how the interactive online learning model(s) will address those needs. What activities/strategies will be implemented to ensure student success?

STUDENT NEEDS TO BE MET AND IDENTIFIED THE STRATEGIES IT WILL INCORPORATE: Below are the three primary needs identified along with model strategies to address them effectively:
1. Fostering Engagement and Motivation:
• Stimulating Curiosity: Utilizing multimedia to visualize complex concepts and enhance comprehension.
• Gamifying the Learning Process: Incorporating badges and leaderboards to instill friendly competition and sustain motivation.
• Cultivating Collaboration: Establishing discussion forums and interactive activities to encourage peer-to-peer engagement and foster a dynamic learning atmosphere.
2. Personalizing the Learning Experience:
• Tailoring Learning to Individual Pace: Offering personalized learning paths that accommodate diverse needs and objectives, ensuring each student progresses comfortably.
• Encouraging Self-Directed Exploration: Providing clear guidance and support to empower students as independent learners.
• Implementing Adaptive Content: Adapting content to cater to various learning styles, thereby providing a customized learning experience for each student.
3. Cultivating a Supportive Community:
• Creating Virtual Hubs: Establishing discussion forums and collaborative projects to nurture vibrant virtual communities where students can connect and learn collectively.
• Harnessing Peer Interaction: Promoting peer-to-peer interaction and feedback to foster a collaborative environment.
• Providing Teacher Support: Offering timely feedback and ongoing support from teachers to enhance students' sense of belonging and keep them on track.
These interactive strategies aim to cultivate an engaging, personalized, and supportive online learning environment. By addressing these fundamental student needs, we aim to empower them for a successful learning journey.

3. How will the LEA select and support teachers and other support staff to implement the interactive online learning grant? How will (1) the LEA ensure teacher commitment and (2) ensure they have all the necessary tools and professional development to implement the interactive online learning model(s) effectively?

HOW LEA WILL SELECT/SUPPORT TEACHERS AND SUPPORT STAFF: The Charter will begin with proper teacher selection.
Teacher Selection:
• Principals will identify committed, innovative teachers based on their experience, online teaching adaptability, and technology openness.
HOW THE LEA WILL ENSURE TEACHER COMMITMENT: Ensuring Teacher Commitment will include:
• Establishing clear expectations:
1.) Communicating grant goals and outcomes, and 2) Highlighting impact on student learning.
• Recognition and Appreciation:
1) Celebrating efforts and showcasing success. 2) Providing stipends tied to successful implementation. 3) Acknowledging dedication at school events and online platforms.
HOW THE LEA WILL ENSURE THAT THEY HAVE THE TOOLS AND PD TO IMPLEMENT: This will involve:
Dedicated Oversight:
• Provide a salary for a Technology Specialist to provide consistent oversight of staff and answer questions.
Support Strategies:
1.) Offering Comprehensive PD on online teaching. 2) Providing mentoring and coaching by experienced teachers. 3) Ensuring access to resources.
Feedback and Reflection:
• Regularly collect and utilize teacher feedback.
Incentives and Recognition:
• Offer stipends and acknowledge dedication.

TEA Program Requirements (Cont'd)

4. Describe how the proposed budget will meet the needs and goals of the program, including staffing, professional development, and resources needed to support the implementation of the effective interactive online learning model(s).

HOW THE PROPOSED BUDGET ALIGNS WITH PROGRAM NEEDS AND GOALS: This section details how the proposed budget directly addresses the program's needs and goals, encompassing staffing, professional development, and resources required for successful implementation:
• Staffing: Budget allocations will allow for a hired Technology Specialist to ensure the program can be run effectively.
• Professional Development (PD): We will allocate funds for ongoing PD sessions on effective online teaching strategies, student engagement, and assessment techniques. Additionally, we plan to engage external PD providers—experts who can conduct specialized workshops to enhance teacher skills in interactive online instruction.
• Supplies and Materials: Budgetary resources will be dedicated to acquiring the necessary technology infrastructure, including robust servers, databases, and Learning Management Systems (LMS) platforms. This infrastructure will be scalable to accommodate a growing student body. Furthermore, funds will be used to obtain software licenses and subscriptions, as well as multimedia content creation tools. This ensures that teachers have access to educational software, content creation tools, and communication platforms. With these tools, teachers can create engaging videos, interactive quizzes, and multimedia presentations.
• Bridging the Digital Divide: Recognizing the importance of inclusivity, we will allocate funds for providing devices (laptops, tablets, adaptive technology) to students with special needs (Special Education/ELL) and classrooms requiring additional student devices. This initiative aims to bridge the digital divide and ensure equitable access to online learning.
• Indirect: Budget allocation to ensure the program can be managed by the charter.

By following this structured budget, we can guarantee that the program fulfills its goals, supports teachers, and provides the essential resources for the successful implementation of interactive online learning models.

5. Describe how the LEA will ensure successful cross-curricular implementation of the program in the 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 school years.

TO ENSURE SUCCESSFUL CROSS-CURRICULAR IMPLEMENTATION, THE LEA WILL ADOPT A PHASED APPROACH:
• 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 School Years: Grades 6-8; Subjects will include: English Language Arts (ELA), Texas History, and U.S. History. Other subject areas will also have input and guidance on cross-curriculum implementation from the Online Learning Staff and the Curriculum Department.
During this phase, the Charter will:
• Conduct curriculum alignment: The interactive online learning model(s) will be aligned with existing curriculum standards.
• Foster teacher collaboration: Teachers from English Language Arts, Social Studies, and other relevant subjects will work together to ensure seamless integration across disciplines.
• Promote Professional Learning Communities (PLCs): Establish PLCs where teachers from various disciplines can collaborate on cross-curricular planning, resource sharing, and alignment of instructional strategies.
• Identify common themes: Teachers will design interdisciplinary projects that allow students to apply knowledge and skills across different subject areas, leveraging common themes or topics that span multiple disciplines.

Intentional planning, collaboration, and staff commitment are crucial for successful cross-curricular implementation. To this end, staff stipends have been budgeted to ensure continued engagement and program sustainability.

TEA Program Requirements (Cont'd)

6. How does the LEA plan to sustain the interactive online learning model(s) after the end of the grant period?

PLANS TO SUSTAIN AFTER GRANT PERIOD: Beyond the grant period, the Charter School plans to ensure the long-term success of its online learning model(s) through several key strategies including the following:
• Diversifying Revenue Streams: We will explore funding sources beyond grants to create a financially secure foundation for our online programs.
• Philanthropic Partnerships: We will seek ongoing support from foundations whose missions align with our own, fostering mutually beneficial relationships.
• Budgetary Integration: To ensure ongoing support, we will allocate a dedicated portion of our annual budget to maintain and enhance the online learning model(s).
• Investing in Teachers: We believe our teachers are the heart of our success. We will continue to invest in their professional development (PD) to ensure they have the latest skills and knowledge for effective online teaching.
• Collaboration with Higher Ed: We will partner with universities or colleges to create a win-win situation. Education students will gain valuable experience in online teaching while supporting our program.
• Continuous Improvement: Through regular evaluation and data analysis, we will identify areas for improvement and adapt the online learning model(s) to meet evolving needs and leverage technological advancements.

By implementing these strategies, we are confident that our online learning model(s) will continue to thrive beyond the grant period, delivering lasting benefits to our students.

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**