



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

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):

**Applicant Information**

Organization  CDN  Campus  ESC  UEI

Address  City  ZIP  Vendor ID

Primary Contact  Email  Phone

Secondary Contact  Email  Phone

**Certification and Incorporation**

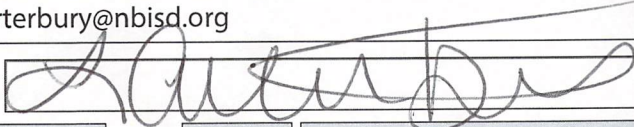
I understand that this application constitutes an offer and, if accepted by TEA or renegotiated to acceptance, will form a binding agreement. I hereby certify that the information contained in this application is, to the best of my knowledge, correct and that the organization named above has authorized 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):

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

Authorized Official Name  Title

Email  Phone

Signature  Date

**Shared Services Arrangements**

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.

In an effort to obtain an effective online interactive learning model for history, inclusive of US and Texas history, and English language arts (ELA) for our secondary schools, New Braunfels ISD (NBISD) went through an extensive process to find an effective resource that aligned to the TEKS. To do so, NBISD developed a committee of stakeholders across the content areas of history and ELA to determine program effectiveness and if the district should pursue funding to purchase the product. Such criteria used to determine program effectiveness included: program alignment to standards (TEKS), accessibility to all learners, positive learning outcomes, research based practices, and seamless classroom implementation.

As a result, NBISD purchased a six month pilot from September 2023 to February 2024 of the Newsela program, a program that clearly aligns content, assessments, and instructional supports to the TEKS throughout Newsela ELA and Newsela Social Studies, correlating major concepts with TEKS standards. The interactive online model contains articles that meticulously tag TEKS, simplifying the process for educators to verify alignment with grade-level content standards. Additionally, the district found Newsela offers a vast selection of meticulously curated, engaging texts at every level of each Newsela article. Whether within Newsela ELA or Newsela Social Studies, teachers find a tailored quiz aligned with TEKS Reading Standards. These quizzes cover a comprehensive array of language forms and functions, including cause and effect, idea interpretation, opinion expression and support, contextual vocabulary, and sentence structure. Each quiz clearly indicates the specific standard being assessed, enabling both students and teachers to track progress against individual TEKS and overall reading proficiency.

During the pilot period, NBISD obtained data and teacher input, both qualitative and quantitative, leading NBISD to determine this resource to be a quality online interactive resource to implement across grades 6 through 12. Specifically, 650 articles were assigned and read by our students in 18 instructional weeks over all subjects. In 6 months, NBISD saw an increase in our cross-curricular reading drastically, supporting a current District initiative of incorporating Notice and Note nonfiction skills and nonfiction reading. NBISD's Curriculum Specialists for Secondary ELA and Social Studies will continue to monitor the program for effectiveness based on student outcomes and for TEKS alignment.

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?

Formative by Newsela is seamlessly aligned to monitor the progress of individual students. Specifically, Formative offers a variety of tools designed to track and analyze student performance against Social Studies (SS) and ELA TEKS in real-time. Educators can create customized assessments, assignments, and activities tailored to the specific learning objectives and TEKS standards. With features such as live feedback, instant grading, and detailed analytics, teachers can closely monitor the progress of each student, identifying areas of strength and those needing improvement. Additionally, Formative's data-driven insights empower educators to personalize instruction and provide targeted interventions for struggling learners. By offering comprehensive monitoring capabilities, Formative enables educators to ensure that every student receives the support and resources they need to progress academically through assessments and activities aligned to the TEKS for both SS and ELA. Another component, Teacher Binder, is a data and reporting dashboard that allows teachers to review student work and track progress. The Teacher Binder includes a Reading Summary tab that shows students' performance on reading skills across both ELA and SS, aligned with five essential reading skills articulated in the TEKS. In addition, quizzes for fiction texts within Newsela ELA offer alignment to the Reading Literature standards. Binder reports on areas that give teachers indicators of student performance across reading skills. The Reading Skills Tab gives teachers indicators of what reading skills students need to work on based on the Reading Comprehension Quiz results. Reading Skills reports give teachers deeper insight into student performance and where each student may need specific support in areas such as reading comprehension.

Additionally, NBISD uses SameGoal for all students receiving Tier 2 and Tier 3 intervention. Students who need a more intensive intervention than Tier 1 instruction have their goals tracked in SameGoal. From there, a progress monitoring plan is developed within SameGoal to track data either weekly or biweekly. This progress monitoring data is accessible to everyone at the campus and NBISD Curriculum Specialists in order to collaboratively support fidelity of data tracking and have robust conversations about student growth and academic needs. Teacher Binder in Newsela will serve as a valuable resource to track and monitor student progress in SameGoal. Both teachers and Intervention staff can track progress and interventions over time and secondary campuses. Additionally, Newsela's Student Binder allows a student to track their lesson progress over time, thus empowering our struggling learners.

**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.

As previously described above, Newsela contains a formative assessment piece referred to as Formative. Formative effectively addresses the need for quarterly benchmark assessments that are automatically scored. The district recently adopted TEKS Resource System and chose to complete many of the Performance Assessments within the units. Through Formative, during our pilot period, our educators were able to find appropriate times to use the Newsela platform to meet the learning standards within a Performance Assessment as outlined by TEKS Resource System.

Importantly, Formative allows teachers to seamlessly upload pre-existing benchmarks into their platform. This functionality enables educators to track student progress consistently over time, incorporating familiar assessments while leveraging Formative's automated scoring capabilities. Additionally, Newsela's quarterly benchmarks allow teachers to edit the writing prompts. This will ensure that our district can maintain our current cross-curricular success with The Writing Revolution by keeping the writing prompts in line with our sentence level work. With instant feedback and detailed analytics provided by the platform, educators can quickly identify areas of strength and areas needing improvement. By integrating pre-existing benchmarks into Formative, teachers can streamline assessment processes, maintain current cross-curricular District initiatives, ensure data consistency, and facilitate more targeted instruction to support student growth effectively.

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).

Within its specialized offerings such as Newsela ELA, Newsela Social Studies, and the Newsela Texas State History Collection, Newsela provides educational resources incorporating both audio narration and video components. Newsela integrates multimedia elements into its content. Educators can leverage audio narration to provide auditory support for text-based materials, catering to diverse learning needs and enhancing accessibility for all students. Of specific note, NBISD educators were especially thrilled with the ease in which they were able to provide for their students supplemental audio and visual needs through Newsela, while maintaining confidentiality for the student.

Newsela also provides the autonomy to control the need for these supplemental components for students. Newsela offers video components that complement textual content, providing visual reinforcement, real-world examples, and interactive learning experiences. One standout feature of Newsela is its read-aloud functionality, which supports both English and Spanish languages, allowing students to engage with content in a natural-sounding voice in their preferred language and optimally supporting our emergent bilingual learners. By combining audio narration and video components, along with multilingual support, Newsela enables educators to create engaging and immersive lessons that captivate students' attention, foster deeper comprehension, and promote active learning within the specialized domains of ELA, social studies, US and Texas state history. This multifaceted approach not only enhances student engagement but also facilitates a more comprehensive and impactful educational experience tailored to specific subject areas across for all secondary students, grades 6 through 12.

**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.

Newsela's ELA, Newsela Social Studies, and the Texas State History Collection provide a comprehensive solution to the demand for educational resources incorporating both English and Spanish. Thousands of pieces of Newsela content, spanning multiple genres, are dually published in English and Spanish. This enables Spanish-speaking English Learners to develop their language skills while furthering their understanding of content. This is best evidenced by a testimony provided by one of NBISD's High School's teacher. "My primary focus is to bridge teachers' language of instruction and students' language of learning in order to help students create meaning from the content and activities presented in class. Newsela has been a powerful literacy tool in my ESOL [English Speakers of Other Languages] classes because it provides high interest material in an easily differentiated format. In other words, NewsELA provides me with skills-based instruction presented in a student friendly manner, empowering students to develop content and language skills simultaneously.

Specifically, Newsela's dedicated "En Español" section facilitates easy access to Spanish language content for both students and teachers. With over 25% of the content offered in Spanish, Newsela ensures broader accessibility for diverse student populations. Moreover, the translations are meticulously crafted by human translators, ensuring quality and accuracy. Each Spanish-language article or text is published at five levels, mirroring the English-language articles and are accompanied by Spanish-language assessments. This comprehensive approach supports language acquisition and content comprehension, catering to the needs of a diverse student body and providing ongoing assurance to our educators that teach and support our Spanish speakers.

**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.

Due to the documented effectiveness, NBISD will implement the Newsela online learning model in the same way we implemented the Newsela six month pilot on our secondary campuses, grades 6 through 12. Through effective communication and ongoing teacher professional development and support, we will equip our educators for a successful implementation of the online interactive program. Grant funding will not only allow us access to the entire Newsela collection, but also Newsela professional development. This professional development will be offered both in 2024 and 2025 to ensure we reach new teachers and those wanting a refresher for the subsequent school year.

Additionally, the secondary Social Studies and ELA Curriculum Specialists will meet with SS and ELA teachers across grades 6 through 12, four times a year to collaborate on program implementation, review and analyze program reports, and discuss student outcomes. This will continue throughout the grant's entirety through the utilization of substitutes for participating teachers.

NBISD's Mission is to engage, empower, and learn as evidenced through Student Success and High Performing Staff. Newsela engages students of all backgrounds in texts and assignments designed to meet them at their level. Additionally, when students are participating in learning experiences designed for them, they are empowered. One of NBISD's goals that falls in line with our mission is Student Success. Engagement and Empowerment through this online learning model will help us achieve our Student Success goals. Additionally, NBISD's Mission is to learn. As we learned from our Newsela pilot, student learning is an expected and evidenced outcome of Newsela. To meet our High-Performing Staff goals, Newsela's professional development, integration of online learning platforms, and technology integration offer opportunities for our staff to learn and grow.

**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?

Three student needs that would be met through the interactive online learning grant are targeted feedback, access to cross-curricular content to develop background knowledge, and accelerated instruction. Newsela will be instrumental in meeting the identified needs of each.

In regards to targeted feedback, after students have completed a formative assessment in the form of a bell ringer, exit ticket, etc., students and teachers receive rich and targeted feedback. This real-time feedback allows students to receive insight into their own strengths and weaknesses allowing our students opportunities for additional targeted support. Newsela's Student Binder allows students to track their progress over time making them stakeholders in their educational journey. In return, teachers can create custom assessments, assignments, and activities tailored to the specific student.

Access to cross-curricular content to develop background knowledge is the second identified need. Newsela provides access to over 15,000 authentic texts. These texts cover a range of cross-curricular topics and student interests. Increasing students' background knowledge has been one of the focus areas of STAAR 2.0. With a wide range of texts, both teacher and students can support their cross-curricular knowledge and decrease their knowledge gap. With Newsela, subjects outside of ELA can assign timely and engaging nonfiction texts and use our NBISD adopted Nonfiction reading strategies to support student dialogue and comprehension outside of the ELA classroom.

Lastly, in regards to accelerated instruction, Newsela provides opportunities for accelerated instruction as a necessary component to our students' success. Newsela's qualitative and quantitative research has shown gains in student achievement through regular usage. According to an ESSA Tier II study, when eighth graders who used Newsela Studies Weekly were compared to their non-using peers, achievement was positively impacted. The positive impact was the equivalent of an additional year of instruction, and was consistent across student race, gender, and language status.

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?

In the 2023-2024 school year, NBISD piloted Newsela for 6 months on our secondary campuses. We had the majority of ELA, Social Studies, Science, as well as a few Career and Technology Education (CTE) teachers utilize the Newsela program. Those whose students used it with greater consistency experienced the most academic gains. NBISD will review the pilot data and choose our most active teacher users to share their testimonials and results with their campuses. We will begin with a campus training and provide support to teachers in the implementation process through the Newsela team and our technology and curriculum staff. Campus administration, along with district staff, will determine an expectation of usage and share this expectation with their staff prior to the start of the school year. Along with utilizing the purchased Newsela professional development training, the district will choose 50 educators spanning 6th-12th grade. These educators, Newsela Leaders, will receive 4 full-day professional learning community (PLC) collaborative opportunities a year to receive further professional development to share with their campus staff, discuss student products and teacher reports, as well as other identified needs. This will be instrumental in sustainability by developing our own Trainer of Trainer model past the grant's end. Our district acknowledges that the most effective way to support a program is to educate our teachers with as many professional development opportunities as possible, while also giving them time to synthesize the new information and skills. We will provide whole-staff professional development training throughout the year, given by our campus Newsela Leaders, during District-wide Professional Development days. Our District Curriculum Specialist will work with our Newsela Leaders to ensure they are effective in providing their respective campus Newsela professional development. Social Studies and ELA teachers will be recognized for their commitment to the program and showcased through social media throughout the school year. As a one-to-one iPad District, our students have the tools necessary to use Newsela to its fullest potential. Each teacher has a District provided laptop and iPad giving them the ability to utilize every element of the proposed online learning model.

**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).

In order to effectively implement the Interactive Online Learning Grant, Cycle 1, NBISD has developed the following budget to best support teachers in implementation and ensure student success:

61XX - The district will utilize existing staff for implementation at no cost to the grant, specifically the District's elementary and secondary Social Studies and ELA Curriculum Specialists. However, to meet the professional development plan for NBISD as described in the grant narrative, the district will need substitutes to allow teachers to meet each nine weeks with content area applicable teachers to receive ongoing professional development and participate in professional learning communities (PLCs). Fifty (50) representatives, our Newsela Leaders, from grades 6-12 - Social Studies and ELA, will meet four times a year calculated at \$125/day. \$50,000 will be needed to implement this vital component over the two year grant period.

62XX - Along with the work of the District's Curriculum Specialists, the second component of the professional learning plan is comprised of six virtual sessions for \$4,500 each year. These training sessions will be offered in Summer One and Summer Two of the grant period in order to reach all new teachers and those wanting a refresher on program components. The total cost for 64XX will be \$9,000.

63XX - The Newsela software costs for two years for all student grades 6-12 will equal \$187,081 total. This software is capitalized due to its two year span of the software quote.

The total cost for implementation of the Interactive Online Learning Grant, Cycle I is \$246,081.

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

Newsela's ELA, Newsela Social Studies, and the Texas State History Collection provide a comprehensive solution to the demand for educational resources incorporating both English and Spanish. Research shows that it is imperative for students to have a strong foundation in their native language before they can acquire their second language. By providing Spanish resources we can build on that foundation, then use best practices that are necessary for our Emergent Bilinguals to bridge the content and language. Our students will be able to understand the content in their native language to then use metalinguistic connections to the English text. As a result this will assist our students in learning the content as they acquire their English. Thousands of pieces of Newsela content, spanning multiple genres, are dually published in English and Spanish. This enables Spanish-speaking English Learners to develop their language skills while furthering their understanding of content. This is best evidenced by a testimony provided by one of NBISD's High School's teacher. "My primary focus is to bridge teachers' language of instruction and students' language of learning in order to help students create meaning from the content and activities presented in class. Newsela has been a powerful literacy tool in my ESOL classes because it provides high interest material in an easily differentiated format..."

Specifically, Newsela's dedicated "En Español" section facilitates easy access to Spanish language content for both students and teachers. Incorporating culturally relevant examples, case studies, and materials in Spanish helps make learning more relatable and meaningful for Spanish-speaking students, fostering a sense of identity and belonging. This allows students to actively participate in their learning process, reinforcing key concepts and promoting retention. With over 25% of the content offered in Spanish, Newsela ensures broader accessibility for diverse student populations. Moreover, the translations are meticulously crafted by human translators, ensuring quality and accuracy. Each Spanish-language article or text is published at five levels, mirroring the English-language articles and are accompanied by Spanish-language assessments. This comprehensive approach supports language acquisition and content comprehension, catering to the needs of a diverse student body and providing ongoing assurance to our educators that teach and support our Spanish speakers.

**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?

Upon the end of the grant period, NBISD will sustain the use of Newsela using local funds and other applicable grant funding available. Of note, at the conclusion of the grant, through the funding provided through the Interactive Online Learning Grant, Cycle 1, the district will have built a host of trainers through the professional development and PLC work provided through years one and two of the grant. Additionally, NBISD's secondary Social Studies and ELA Curriculum Specialists will continue to be a sustainable training resource for future teachers new to the district after the grant funding ends.



**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.

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**Amended Section**

**Reason for Amendment**