



2023-2024 Tri-Agency Grant for Regional Conveners
Letter of Interest (LOI) Application Due 11:59 p.m. CT, January 13, 2023

NOGA ID [redacted]

Authorizing legislation **Senate Bill 1, Part 18. CONTINGENCY AND OTHER PROVISIONS, Sec. 18.15. Contingency for House Bill 1525**

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, January 13, 2023**.

Grant period from **March 1, 2023 - April 30, 2024**

Pre-award costs permitted from **Award Date**

Application stamp-in date and time

Required Attachments

- Application Part 2: Excel workbook with the grant's budget schedules (linked along with this form on the TEA Grants Opportunities page)
- Attachment A: Regional Convener Reference Form (Submit up to three forms with Application)

Application Information

Which workforce development area are you located in and applying to represent as a regional convener? **Region 22**

Select your organization type: **Education Service Center**

Amendment Number

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

Applicant Information

Organization **Education Servicer Center, Region 2** CDN **178-950**

Address **209 North Water Street** City **Corpus Christi** ZIP **78401** Vendor ID **1741587916**

Primary Contact **Kimberly Davis** Email **Kimberly.Davis@esc2.us** Phone **361-561-8551**

Secondary Contact **Judith Gonzalez-Rodriguez** Email **Judith.Gonzalez-Rodriguez@esc2.us** Phone **361-561-8604**

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 **Esperanza Zendejas, Ed. D.** Title **Executive Director**

Email **Esperanza.Zendejas@esc2.us** Phone **361-561-8404**

Signature *Esperanza Zendejas* Date **1/12/13**

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 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 Tri-Agency Grant to Regional Conveners Program Guidelines.
- 4. The applicant provides assurance to adhere to all the Performance Measures, as noted in the 2023-2024 Tri-Agency Grant to Regional Conveners 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 TAC 206, 1 TAC Chapter 213, Federal Section 508 standards, and the WCAG 2.0 AA Accessibility Guidelines.
- 6. The applicant assures to carry out the roles and responsibilities of a regional convener for a geographic region with boundaries identical to those of the workforce development area.
- 7. The applicant assures to identify at least one staff person, who meets the qualifications and experience of a regional convener lead as outlined in these guidelines, with adequate time allocated to the work of this grant project and who will serve as the regional convener lead.
- 8. The applicant assures to identify multiple staff at the regional convener organization to engage in the work and participate in the designation process. This includes someone in an executive leadership position who has decision-making authority on behalf of the regional convener organization.
- 9. The applicant assures to complete all grant activities and deliverables in a timely manner, as described in the description of program and performance and evaluation measures.
- 10. The applicant assures to coordinate with their assigned coach, to be provided by TEA for technical assistance, and meet with their coach frequently throughout the project, including within the first month to align on program priorities and requirements.

Statutory/Program Assurances cont'd

- 11. The applicant assures to convene and engage a cross-sector pathways leadership team in the strategic planning process within the first three months of the grant project.
- 12. The applicant assures to develop an asset map and gap analysis within six months of the grant start date under the direction and guidance of their assigned coach. In addition, the applicant will keep this landscape analysis updated throughout the grant project.
- 13. The applicant assures to develop, in collaboration with members of the cross-sector leadership team, a strategic plan and supporting action plans within the first 12 months of the grant project.
- 14. The applicant assures to plan and execute work-based learning that will address K-12 gaps and will expand upon existing work-based learning within their region.
- 15. The applicant assures to participate and engage in statewide training and convenings during the grant period.

Statutory/Program Requirements

1. **Current Regional Landscape** - Describe the key career and education pathway initiatives and/or programs currently underway in your region, including those funded by TEA, THECB, and/or TWC, and your current level of involvement in those initiatives. Please also describe the current staff you have in place to support these initiatives and/or programs who will continue to be involved in this project and any new staff you would like to use grant dollars to hire to support this work. Describe the qualifications and experience of the staff person who will serve as the regional convener lead for this grant project.

The current unemployment rate for the Coastal Bend Region (WorkforceSolutionscb.org, 2023) is 4.8%. This rate is higher than the state rate of 3.7% and the national rate of 3.4%, which identifies the dire need of a Regional Convener in the Coastal Bend. The Workforce Solutions of the Coastal Bend has adopted a "Crayons to Careers" strategic plan to partner with education and business to promote and develop a skilled talent pool. Additionally, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board has committed through their strategic plan to expand opportunities for individuals to earn degrees, certificates, and other credentials with a target of 60% of Texans aged 25-34 to have earned one of these pathways by 2030. As a partner in these initiatives, the Region 2, Education Service Center has been focused on developing options for our large number of rural districts to participate in meaningful and diverse education pathways and programs that may have previously been limited do to access. We were also able increase the Work-Based learning opportunities across the Coastal Bend to better align the regional CTE programs with high-wage, in-demand, and high-skill occupations in Texas. As an example, we recently added Printing and Imaging, Drone, and Aviation to our initiatives and virtual options for student participation reaching into the furthest corners of our region. Our team of Education Specialists in the Special Programs department share an expertise in Career and Technology Education, Transition Planning, Small and Rural Schools, and specialized supports for students served for medical or learning disabilities, Migrant and English language learners, and other high-risk students to ensure equity and accessibility for all students in the Coastal Bend region. Additionally, we have recently recruited and are onboarding two CTE Specialists to help develop and manage our ESC CTE program and they will serve as the regional convener leads under the direction of Dr. Kimberly Davis, Associate Director for Special Programs. The first is a secondary school counselor with eight years of experience, five of which were served as the CTE counselor for her high school. The second specialist has been involved with CTE programming since 2014 and served as a CTE Director for five years. These candidates will co-lead this grant project.

2. **Regional Convener Priorities** - What are your priorities for strategic alignment across current state, regional, and local pathways initiatives in the WDA? What would be necessary for that alignment to take place?

For the 2022-2023 school year our priorities have been to promote access to more key career and education pathways by increasing our Regional Programs of Study from three to six, provide the training and virtual options for students in small and rural communities, and to support the licensing acquisition of Adobe Creative Suites to our districts to increase opportunities for students to earn industry-based certifications. Additionally, we have provided and support the use of Xello College and Career Readiness Software [Xello] to our Shared Service Arrangement members to better organize the work and collect metrics to determine efficacy. It is our intent to further this work with our partners and districts to increase the number of student participants and successful outcomes through targeted strategic planning. Our biggest challenge is establishing ourselves as a CTE program. This school year is our first year to really evaluate and expand our program that is built on these priorities: (1) Develop and strengthen external partnerships from education, industry, and labor to create work-based learning opportunities; (2) Hire and retain highly-qualified and knowledgeable Specialists to facilitate internal strategic planning and grant management while also providing support, technical assistance, and training to stakeholders for capacity and sustainability; (3) Expand and support the use of Xello across the Coastal Bend Region as a database software system to collect data and monitor progress. Xello is also a means for keeping the CTE program student-centered by engaging the students in their own planning while they build self-knowledge, explore post-secondary options, create plans, and continually reassess their journey as they acquire new knowledge, skills, and experiences.

Statutory/Program Requirements (Cont.)

3. Regional Alignment Experience - Describe your organization's experience leading strategic planning to support regional career and education pathways (or related education and training initiatives) in collaboration with stakeholders representing a mix of industry, K-12 education, higher education, and workforce development entities.

The Region 2, Education Service Center has a long history of collaboration and leading partnerships with stakeholders from industry, K-12 education, higher education, and workforce development entities. As the liaison between the Texas Education Agency and our districts, our purpose is centered on the relationships built with community partners, schools, and families.

4. Regional Data Experience - How do you currently monitor progress and measure quality of career and education pathway programs or initiatives? What do you currently use as metrics or key performance indicators (KPIs) to understand the strength of your region's pathway programming?

The Region 2, Education Service Center has implemented the Xello College and Career Readiness Software with our nineteen (14) shared services arrangement [SSA] districts and will use metrics from this program to drive our efforts. This is a new program for us and our SSA districts and the first year of implementation. Based on the TEA reports for CTE performance and the real time formative data collected through Xello and other campus data points, along with On-Data Suite reports, we will be able to better define our regional needs and where to focus our goals. This first year's goal was to implement Xello and conduct the training necessary for districts to use the software with all students and with fidelity.

Statutory/Program Requirements (Cont.)

5. **Regional Work-Based Learning Experience** – Using the Tri-Agency WBL Continuum attachment available on the TEA Grant Opportunities webpage, describe your experience planning, implementing and/or monitoring work-based learning activities aligned within each of the following categories: a. "Learning about Work"; b. "Learning through Work"; and c. "Learning at Work"

The Region 2, Education Service Center has much experience planning, implementing and/or monitoring work-based learning activities for students to learn about work, learning through work, and learning at work. The Department of Special Programs and applicant for this grant, has worked extensively with our community businesses, families, K-12 schools, post-secondary education providers, workforce development agencies, the Department of Health and Human Services, and others to guide and support the students in our region towards their post-secondary goals. The rich mix of stakeholders affords a depth and breadth of options for all the students in the region to explore and experience. However, there are still challenges to overcome, such as the availability of advanced technology options for students in rural areas to earn industry-based certifications and access to business and industry partners to provide prospects for job shadowing, service learning, and apprenticeships.

Statutory/Program Requirements (Cont.)

6. **Regional Convener Responsibilities** - Describe any current work your organization performs related to the additional functions of regional conveners listed below. If there are functions you do not perform, describe how a partner organization performs the function and your working relationship with them. If there are functions that are not currently performed by either your organization or a partner, provide context for why it has not been a focus of your organization’s work to date. a. Analyze labor market information and work on an ongoing basis to ensure career and education pathways are aligned to in-demand industries in the region; b. Convene a cross-sector leadership team made up of education, workforce, and industry stakeholders to develop and implement a regional vision and strategy; c. Engage employers and broker relationships with education and training providers; d. Streamline communicating information across the region; and e. Drive sustainability planning, including coordinated funding strategies, across education and workforce development entities.

The Region 2, Education Service Center, in collaboration with regional business and industry, workforce agencies, institutions of higher education, school districts, and the military can analyze and monitor current labor market information and trends to facilitate the alignment of needs and pathways to filling those gaps. The ongoing communication and strategic meetings will drive our sustainability of services and the capacity of districts and businesses to form the regional pathway system.

Statutory/Program Requirements (Cont.)

7. **Partnerships** - Describe your current partnership(s), including the specific activities involved, with the following: a. Industry partnerships or specific employer partners (by sector); b. Postsecondary education; c. Secondary education; and d. Workforce or economic development.

One of the priorities for the Education Service Center is to increase CTE program offerings for school districts across the region. Over the last four years, our region received the most awards for the grant out of the entire state. Much of this success can be attributed to the partnership with the Texas Workforce Commission, where we were able to provide workshops for grant writing, review applications, and work together to ensure success. One of our current projects with the Texas Workforce Commission hosting the Charting the Course Transition Conference. This is year five of our work together and currently we have 200 students enrolled to participate in the first week of February 2023. Education 2 Employment [E2E] is another partner for college and career exploration activities and events held at the Education Service Center, in partnership with our Special Programs department, to maximize attendance of students from small and rural schools. These events reach students in grades K-12 and last year alone, over 500 students participated in our events.

We were able to increase postsecondary awareness through partnerships with all the institutions of higher education within the region, to include Del Mar College, Texas A&M University-Kingsville, Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, and Coastal Bend College. Through college and career exploration activities, the Education Service Center, Region 2, was able to enhance the recruitment efforts, especially in our small and rural schools.

Mental Health and Intellectual Disabilities [MHID] is another partner that collaborates with us to provide training in soft business and worksite skills such as conflict resolution, managing stress, and effective communication strategies.

The Education Service Center, Region 2 has also worked with Opportunity Now to develop and enhance sustainable career and educational pathways with an emphasis on elevating traditionally under-served populations. This includes students with disabilities and at-risk youth. In addition to providing direct services to these populations our partnership includes supporting the analysis of our regional labor market information, collaborative strategic planning that utilizes the labor market analysis, and predicting longitudinal regional needs for the sustainability of plans.

Statutory/Program Requirements (Cont.)

8. **Budget narrative** - Describe how the proposed budget will support the goals of the program. Please include justification for the specific funding allocations in the proposed budget, including how costs are connected to the grant activities described in this solicitation. Please also describe how each item in the proposed budget will support the needs of the regional team, beyond any one specific regional partner. In addition, include a description of other funding sources the region will leverage, if any, to support implementation of this project and future work.

The included \$600,000 budget will be the catalyst for the Region 2, Education Service Center to become the Regional Convener and leader of the cross-sector pathways. Two specialists were chosen for their diverse and cumulative experiences. The secondary guidance counselor has experiences administering activities, searches, and development of students preparing for post-secondary life. The CTE director has experience building programs, serving on advisory boards, and evaluation of CTE programs and outcomes. Together, their shared experiences will meet all dimensions of regional leadership. Their support staff will assist with data entry and assimilation as well as coordination of services and activities of the regional convener. Professional and contracted services will be utilized to conduct a summer and winter Regional CTE Fair. The expenses for building and room rental and contracted industry and keynote speakers will enhance the quality of the Fairs and provide a broader range of session offerings. Additionally, these funds support the required regional trainings plus others, as needed. Supplies and materials will include development of web-based resources (e. g., website design) as well as CTE materials and educational products designed to promote and instruct all regional stakeholders. Other operating costs provide the resources for attendance at the National Work-Based Learning Conference in April. Xello is currently being funded through the Perkins V grant so is not indicated in this grant application. Combining the resources of both grants creates a foundation for capacity and sustainability as we plan our programming.

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