



# 2024-2025 Stronger Connections Grant

Competitive Grant Application: Due 11:59 p.m. CT, July 18, 2023

NOGA ID

Application stamp-in date and time

TEA will only accept grant application documents by email, including competitive grant applications and amendments. Submit grant applications and amendments as follows:

Competitive grant applications and amendments to [competitivegrants@tea.texas.gov](mailto:competitivegrants@tea.texas.gov).

The application MUST bear the signature of a person authorized to bind the applicant to a contractual agreement

**Authorizing legislation:** PL 117-159 Bipartisan Safer Communities Act Title II School Improvement Programs, BSCA

**Grant period:** From 11/15/2023 to 09/30/2025

**Pre-award costs:** ARE NOT permitted for this grant

**Required attachments:** N/A

### Amendment Number

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

### 1. Applicant Information

Name of organization Taylor Independent School District

Campus name n/a

CDN 246911

Vendor ID 1746002357

ESC 13

UEI

Address 3101 North Main Street

City Taylor

ZIP 76574

Phone 512-365-1391

Primary Contact Rachelle Finck

Email rfinck@taylorisd.org

Phone 512-365-1391

Secondary Contact Clarissa Rodriguez

Email crodriguez@taylorisd.org

Phone 512-365-1391

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

- Grant application, guidelines, and instructions
- Debarment and Suspension Certification
- General Provisions and Assurances
- Lobbying Certification
- Application-Specific Provisions and Assurances
- ESSA Provisions and Assurances requirements

Authorized Official Name Clarissa Rodriguez Title Assist. Sup T&L Email crodriguez@taylorisd.org

Phone 513-365-1391

Signature

Date 7/17/2023

Grant Writer Name Rachelle Finck

Signature

Date 7/17/2023

Grant writer is an employee of the applicant organization.

Grant writer is not an employee of the applicant organization.

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**3. Shared Services Arrangements**

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

**4. Identify/Address Needs**

List up to three quantifiable needs, as identified in your needs assessment, that these program funds will address. Describe your plan for addressing each need.

Quantifiable Need	Plan for Addressing Need
As of May 2023, Taylor ISD has reported 90 Mental Health concerns (suicidal ideation and Non - Suicidal Self Injury) and 7 known suicide attempts among students.	Establish comprehensive plan for mental health supports including additional School - Based Mental Health contracted days through Impact Counseling and locally employed district employees certified as school social workers.
As of May 2023, 75% of staff reported feeling an increase in stress - related behaviors.	Establish additional School - Based Mental Health contracted days to support staff in their mental health needs.
As of May 2023, all mental health reporting tracking are locally developed and housed within a google suite of services.	Establish a comprehensive Multi - Tiered, Multi - Dimensional Support System for Behavior Health concerns, firmly rooted in proactive mental health resources, that is housed in a universal tracking tool.

**5. SMART Goal**

Describe the summative SMART goal you have identified for this program (a goal that is Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Timely), either related to student outcome or consistent with the purpose of the grant.

By the end of the 2025, the number of students in Taylor ISD reporting mental health concerns will decrease by 25%.

**6. Measurable Progress**

Identify the benchmarks that you will use at the end of the first three grant quarters to measure progress toward meeting the process and implementation goals defined for the grant.

**First-Quarter Benchmark**

For the first - quarter of this grant, progress measures will include:

- 1.) Hiring & onboarding social workers within the school district.
- 2.) Planning & implementing monthly staff wellness programming.
- 3.) Purchasing and onboarding key technology resources for tracking behaviors and staff mental health
- 4.) Monthly report to Senior Leadership Team
- 5.) Quarterly report to Board of Trustees on program intent and implementation plan.

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**6. Measurable Progress (Cont.)****Second-Quarter Benchmark**

For the second - quarter of this grant, progress measures will include:

- 1.) Planning & implementing monthly staff wellness programming.
- 2.) Monitoring & evaluating school - based mental health programming & procedures.
- 3.) Monitoring & evaluating behavioral health reporting & referral systems for Taylor ISD.
- 4.) Quarterly report to Board of Trustees on programming & initial data findings.

**Third-Quarter Benchmark**

For the third - quarter of this grant, progress measures will include:

- 1.) Implementing & evaluating monthly staff wellness programming.
- 2.) Monitoring & evaluating school - based mental health programming & procedures.
- 3.) Monitoring & evaluating behavioral health reporting & referral systems for Taylor ISD.
- 4.) Creating implementating & onboarding plan for the 2024 - 2025 academic year.
- 5.) Quarterly report to Board of Trutees on programming and program evaluation.

**7. Project Evaluation and Modification**

Describe how you will use project evaluation data to determine when and how to modify your program. If your benchmarks or summative SMART goals do not show progress, describe how you will use evaluation data to modify your program for sustainability.

In order to adequately monitor progress of the supportive schools programming, Taylor ISD will review data reported through RaptorStudentSafe monthly. This platform will allow staff to report low - level behaviors proactively that may indicate a need for greater level of support, as well as serve as the initial referral process for behavioral health MTSS systems. Similarly, the Behavioral Health team will meet weekly to discuss & staff cases, monitor caseloads, and review processes and procedures. Monthly, the district Behavioral Health Student Support Team will meet to discuss feedback from recent surveys and discuss campuses in need of additional support. This team will be comprised of district leaders, community agencies, special education staff, and campus leaders. This team will meet and make necessary adjustments to the procedures and programming set forth by the behavioral health team, as the need arises and is quantified. The Director of Guidance & Counseling will review student mental health reports to adjust staffing if needed. Quarterly, Behavioral Health Staff, Campus Leaders, and District Leaders will receive surveys to determine quality control measures and gather meaningful feedback. The Director of Counseling and Guidance in Taylor ISD will monitor the number and fidelity of the usage of Raport Student Safe, including demographic and disaggrated data based on identifying information.

Finally, in order to determine and develop meaningful programming for staff wellness, a comprehensive needs assessment will be delivered to all staff in Taylor ISD during the first quarter of the grant cycle. The responses from this needs assessment will be used to provide staff wellness activities and programming throughout the district. Semi - annually, staff in Taylor ISD will provide a "quality control" feedback survey from staff regarding the programming offered. Finally, the staff climate survey will be used to determine if program goals have been met.

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**8. Statutory/Program Assurances**

The following assurances apply to this grant program. In order to meet the requirements of the grant, the grantee 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 grant 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 Statutory Requirements, TEA Program Requirements, and Performance Measures, as noted in the 2024–2025 Stronger Connections Grant Program Guidelines, and shall provide the Texas Education Agency, upon request, any performance data necessary to assess the success of the grant program.
- 4. The applicant will formally establish a Student Support Program at three district campuses (one elementary, one intermediate/middle school, one high school) to address school climate and establish a student support team structure aligned to the training and support provided by the Texas Center for Student Supports and the regional ESC. If the applicant has few than three campuses or does not have three of the listed types of campuses, the applicant will establish the Student Support Program and the student support team structure at all campuses, up to three, served in the district.
- 5. The applicant will allocate 6% of awarded funds for contracted services for technical assistance provided by the regional ESC. Complete the transaction with the regional ESC in a timely manner. Time is of the essence in completing the transaction to ensure that the program is implemented efficiently and effectively to successfully achieve the goals of the program.
- 6. The applicant will allocate 10% of awarded funds for professional and contracted services with a partner approved by the Texas Center for Student Support and TEA. Complete the transaction with the regional ESC in a timely manner. Time is of the essence in completing the transaction to ensure that the program is implemented efficiently and effectively to successfully achieve the goals of the program.
- 7. The applicant will use the family engagement playbook developed by the Texas Center for Student Supports to partner and build support with parents and families prior to a student support team assessment, and during the student support implementation process to facilitate a student support partnership with families.
- 8. The applicant will establish a parent, student, and staff advisory committee to provide input on the establishment of the Student Support Program.
- 9. The applicant will engage in Student Support Program planning activities from the beginning of the grant program through implementation at the beginning of the 2024-2025 school year.
- 10. The applicant will establish and implement at the beginning of the 2024-2025 school year, the Student Support Program aligned to the content and training provided by the Texas Center for Student Supports.
- 11. The applicant will incorporate a case management system into the student support team structure aligned to the training and support provided by the Texas Center for Student Supports.
- 12. The applicant will align the student support team structure with behavioral threat assessment team operation and outcomes to ensure that students are well supported and that the effectiveness of interventions are monitored.
- 13. The applicant will implement the data collection and reporting system developed by the Texas Center for Student Supports to gather and analyze data to monitor efficacy of the implementation of the Student Support Program, including student support team structure, quality of support leading to positive outcomes, and data related to increases in desired outcomes (e.g. increase in student support team referrals for nonacademic needs, increase in effective supports received by students, reduction in disciplinary incidents, reduction in bullying and harassment, increase in referrals for mental health services, reduction in removals from class, etc.).
- 14. The applicant will provide timely response to requests from TEA for information and data regarding program development, implementation, and performance and evaluation measures.

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**9. Statutory/ TEA Program Requirements**

1. Describe how the LEA will identify the campuses that will participate in the establishment of the Student Support Program described in the program description? Include the criteria or considerations that will influence the determination by the LEA.

In 2023, Taylor ISD will "unstack" elementaries to create 2 comprehensive 1 - 5 elementary campuses. Therefore, all 6 campuses in Taylor ISD (TH Johnson Elementary, Naomi Pasemann Elementary, Main Street Intermediate, Taylor Middle School, Taylor High School, and Legacy Early College High School) will participate in this grant application. In reviewing mental health data from the 2021 - 2023 school years, it is evident that mental health needs are prevalent across all campuses in the district and Taylor ISD firmly believes that a proactive early - intervention model are necessary in order to provide adequate interventions for students regarding their mental health. Additionally, all staff responding to surveys in Taylor ISD expressed a need for additional adult wellness programming. Therefore, district leadership believes that all staff members need adequate access to comprehensive mental health needs in the district, rather than focusing on three specific campuses.

2. Describe how the LEA will ensure that campus leaders and staff are committed to the success of the Student Support Program.

In order to build buy in and establish commitment to the Student Success Program, an ongoing stakeholder committee meeting will be held that will focus on campus procedures for reporting suspecting behaviors, referrals to staff social workers and school - based mental health providers, as well as programming staff wellness throughout the year. During these committee meetings, at least 1 member from each campus, as well as district leadership from various programs such as counseling, health services, community engagement, and special education, will be present. These campus participants will work collaboratively with district staff to communicate program intent and procedures. Communication between program intent and district leadership will be open and frequent. Monthly updates to Taylor ISD Senior Leadership Team and quarterly updates to the Board of Trustees will be transparent and work to establish key communication systems between all stakeholders in the district. Communication must be frequent and intentional in order to build buy in and establish trust in the work of the Student Support Program.

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**9. Statutory/Program Requirements (Cont.)**

3. Describe how the LEA will engage parents and families to solicit support for the program.

Taylor ISD will work collaboratively with parents and families to solicit support for the Student Support Program through frequent and clear two - way communication. The district's communication plan includes montly " newsletters" to parents and families that include numerous ways to support students in need. Quarterly, parents will receive information through campus newsletters on how to make referrals for students they believe are in need of additional support. Additionally, through the use of the Family and Community Engagement team, Taylor ISD will host a number of parent and family workshops in conjunction with the Williamson County Child Advocacy Center. These workshops will provide families with resources and supports in navigating child - raising needs in the modern era. At the end of each workshop, participants will complete a satisfaction and knowledge survey. At the end of the year, parents will receive a climate survey asking specific questions, developed by the Student Support Team, to address key areas of the Student Support Program and the intent of this grant program.

4. Describe how the LEA will ensure that there is adequate staff to support the establishment and implementation of the Student Support Program.

In order to ensure adequate staff to support the establishment and implemenetation of the Student Support Program, the Director of Guidance & Counseling will oversee the implementation of programming and staff supports. Each campus currently has school counselors with caseloads within the 350:1 set forth by TEA. These staff members will serve as "tier 2" supports for students on campus and serve as a liason between campus needs and social worker referrals. The school counselors and administartors on campus will complete the referral process for each campus, compiling necessary data from various sources housed within the Raptor StudentSafe platform. Additionally, 3 social workers funded through grant funds will work collaboratively with staff to develop caseloads and manage ongoing mental health needs of students and staff. If additional staff members are needed based on caseloads, referrals, and demands of the district, senior leadership team will make adjustments accordingly. Finally, additional days for School - Based Mental Health can be contracted as needed based on the needs of the district. Our current budget allows for at least 1 campus day per week for a mental health professional to serve a campus, however additional funds provided by the grant award will allow for an increase in services to meet the current needs of district supports.

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**9. Statutory/Program Requirements (Cont.)**

5. Describe how each of the campuses will be supported by the grant program, if awarded, currently conduct behavioral threat assessments and how the campus will incorporate current systems into the student support team structure.

Currently, each campus hosts a fully - trained Safe and Supportive Schools team. These teams meet all requirements of state statute and are fully operational for the 2023 - 2024 academic year. Based on organizational structures within the district, the Director of Guidance & Counseling oversees the fidelity and implementation of these teams. She works collaboratively with campus leaders to ensure teams work within the requirements of the law as well as provide meaningful consultation for campuses when the need arises. Within the Supportive Schools Program, the social workers hired will sit as active members of the Safe and Supportive Schools team, the team will be able to view longitudinal data within the Raptor StudentSafe program for fact - gathering, and the team will document their investigations within the StudentSafe platform. Currently, these are housed within Google Docs & Sheets to track and monitor needs of campuses. Similarly, as staff refer students to Impact Counseling, our local school based mental health authority, the increase in contracted days allows for an increase in services and continuity of care. Additionally, as the District Behavioral Health team meets monthly, they will provide consultation services for staff with high - need, high - demand cases on campus.

6. Describe how the LEA currently identifies student support needs and how it identifies and establishes partnerships with external mental health and behavioral health providers to meet student needs.

Currently, the LEA works in conjunction with a variety of mental and behavioral health. These include a local school - based mental health authority, Impact Counseling, the local mental - health authority, Bluebonnet Trails, and many mental health agencies. Students are referred to school counselors if troubling behaviors are identified, who conduct needs assessments and staff the student with families and administrators. If a student expresses suicidal ideation and/or homicidal ideation, a complete Columbia Assessment is conducted. The parents are contacted and a list of local mental health agencies are provided to the family. A gap in care for TISD currently lies in helping parents and families navigate the highly stressful time and receive support in supporting their child in crisis. Through the use of the multi - tiered support system, staff will be able to refer students to the school - based social workers before crisis occurs and collaborate on an action plan for each student. Additionally, counselors meet with school - based mental health providers in the area at least once a month to discuss ways to improve referral systems, build connections, and establish systems of supports for students before a crisis presents itself. School based social workers would join this team and serve as additional community liasons in this work.

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**9. Statutory/Program Requirements (Cont.)**

7. Describe how the LEA currently partners with the regional ESC to support improvement in student mental health, behavioral and emotional health, physical health and wellbeing, and improving academic outcomes for students.

Currently, Taylor ISD partners with Region 13 as members of the Counselor Co - Op, providing ongoing professional development for counselors and mental health needs. Additionally, Region 13 provides comprehensive professional development and support for staff in the areas of: School Threat Assessment Teams, Mental Health, Behavioral Health, and Legal consultation.

8. Describe how the LEA will use this grant program to supplement current work to improve services and supports for the mental health, behavioral and emotional health, and physical health and wellness of students.

Currently, Taylor ISD has a comprehensive school based mental health system in place. With the current staffing model, students are unable to be seen by a licensed mental health professional in a timely manner. With the grant funds provided, the social workers will work to provide tier 2 and tier 3 supports for students and expedite level of care for students and families. These social workers will be integral in the correct placement for students and families in community resources. Similarly, the additional contracted days with the school- based mental health authority, students and families will have an opportunity to receive professional, behavioral health services during the school day. This increased access to mental health supports during the school day creates increased equity for under-identified and under-served populations within the district.

9. Enter the LEA Total Enrollment:

3144

10. Enter the Regional Educational Service Center that serves the LEA:

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**10. 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 grant.

- The applicant assures that no barriers exist to equitable access and participation for any groups receiving services funded by this grant.
- 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"/>

**11. PNP Equitable Services**

Are any private nonprofit schools located within the applicant's boundaries?

- Yes  No

*If you answered "No" to the preceding question, stop here. You have completed the section. Proceed to the next page.*

Are any private nonprofit schools participating in the grant?

- Yes  No

*If you answered "No" to the preceding question, stop here. You have completed the section. Proceed to the next page.*

**Assurances**

- The LEA assures that it discussed all consultation requirements as listed in Section 1117(b)(1) and/or Section 8501(c)(1), as applicable, with all eligible private nonprofit schools located within the LEA's boundaries.
- The LEA assures the appropriate Affirmations of Consultation will be provided to TEA's PNP Ombudsman in the manner and time requested.

**Equitable Services Calculation**

1. LEA's student enrollment	<input type="text"/>
2. Enrollment of all participating private schools	<input type="text"/>
3. Total enrollment of LEA and all participating PNPs (line 1 plus line 2)	<input type="text"/>
4. Total current-year grant allocation	<input type="text"/>
5. LEA reservation for direct administrative costs, not to exceed the grant's defined limit	<input type="text"/>
6. Total LEA amount for provision of ESSA PNP equitable services (line 4 minus line 5)	<input type="text"/>
7. Per-pupil LEA amount for provision of ESSA PNP equitable services (line 6 divided by line 3)	<input type="text"/>
<b>LEA's total required ESSA PNP equitable services reservation (line 7 times line 2)</b>	<input type="text"/>

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**12. Request for Grant Funds**

List all of the allowable grant-related activities for which you are requesting grant funds. Include the amounts budgeted for each activity. Group similar activities and costs together under the appropriate heading. During negotiation, you will be required to budget your planned expenditures on a separate attachment provided by TEA.

**Payroll Costs**

1.	Social Worker (3 @ \$70,000/year for 2 fiscal years each)	\$420,000.00
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

**Professional and Contracted Services**

6.	Required 6% of funds for technical assistance provided by the regional ESC	\$29,778
7.	Required 10% of funds to the Texas Center for Student Supports	\$49,630
8.	Impact Counseling (Difference in Contracted Days)	\$50,000.00
9.	Raptor StudentSafe	\$8,300.00
10.	Calm for Schools	\$5,000.00

**Supplies and Materials**

11.	Teacher Wellness Supplies	\$10,000
12.		
13.		

**Other Operating Costs**

15.	Social Worker Onboarding Supplies (technology, office supplies, office space, etc...)	\$3,000
16.		
17.		

**Debt Services**

18.		
19.		

**Capital Outlay**

20.		
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Direct administrative costs:

Indirect administrative costs:

**TOTAL GRANT AWARD REQUESTED:**

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**Appendix I: Negotiation and Amendments**

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 of the TEA website and may be mailed OR faxed (not both). **To fax:** one copy of all sections pertinent to the amendment (including budget attachments), along with a completed and signed page 1, to either (512) 463-9811 or (512) 463-9564. **To mail:** three copies of all sections pertinent to the amendment (including budget attachments), along with a completed and signed page 1, to the address on page 1. More detailed amendment instructions can be found on the last page of the budget template.

*You may duplicate this page.*

For amendments, choose the section you wish to amend from the drop down menu on the left. In the text box on the right, describe the changes you are making and the reason for them.

Always work with the most recent negotiated or amended application. If you are requesting a revised budget, please include the budget attachments with your amendment.

Section Being Negotiated or Amended	Negotiated Change or Amendment
<input type="text"/>	
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