

Informal Discretionary Competition (Grant)

LASO Cycle 3 (2024-2025)

Learning Acceleration Support Opportunities

2024-2025 Strong Foundations Implementation School Improvement PLC Supports Grant

Program Guidelines

REVISED 11/20/24

Authorized by Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Title I, Part A, Section 1003.



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Grant Program Guidelines

Grant Name as it will appear on the TEA Grant Opportunities Page	Strong Foundations Implementation School Improvement PLC Supports
Application Due Date	December 13, 2024; 5:00 p.m. CT
Program Authority	Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Title I, Part A, Section 1003

Introduction

TEA, as the pass-through entity¹, is the grantee² from the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) and TEA awards subgrants to non-federal entities³ such as local educational agencies (LEAs), including school districts, charter schools, and education service centers, and to a lesser degree institutions of higher education (IHEs), and nonprofit organizations (NPOs) who are the agency's subgrantees⁴. These guidelines apply to all subgrantees of TEA, regardless of whether referenced herein as subgrantee or grantee. For purposes of this document, TEA may use the terms grantee and subgrantee synonymously for its subrecipients.

This part of the request for application (RFA), Program Guidelines, is to be used in conjunction with the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#) and any application instructions.

For applicants selected for funding, all guidelines and instructions will be incorporated by reference into the Notice of Grant Award (NOGA).

Reference to the General and Fiscal Guidelines

The Program Guidelines provide information specifically relevant to this grant program. The [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#) provide information relevant to all TEA grant programs. Throughout the Program Guidelines, cross-references are given to applicable sections of the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#). It is critical that you review all referenced sections of the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#) when preparing your application.

Errata Notices

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), Errata Notices.

¹ Pass-through entity is defined as a non-Federal entity that provides a subaward to a subrecipient to carry out part of a federal program. (2 CFR 200.74)

² Grantee is defined as the legal entity to which a grant is awarded and that is accountable to the federal government for the use of the funds provided. The term "grantee" does not include any secondary recipients, such as subgrantees and contractors that may receive funds from a grantee. (34 CFR 77)

³ Non-federal entity is defined as a state, local government, Indian tribe, institution of higher education, or nonprofit organization that carries out a federal award as a recipient or subrecipient. (2 CFR 200.69)

⁴ Subgrantee is defined by TEA to be the same as a subrecipient which is defined as a non-federal entity that receives a subaward from a pass-through entity to carry out part of a federal program; but does not include an individual that is a beneficiary of such program. (2 CFR 200.93) Subgrantee is defined in 34 CFR 77 as the legal entity to which a subgrant is awarded and that is accountable to the grantee for the use of the funds provided.

Overview of the Informal Discretionary Competition (IDC) Grant Process

The following steps provide a high-level overview of the process for responding to a grant opportunity, including submitting an application, and being selected for funding:

1. TEA publishes IDC application and supporting documents on the [TEA Grant Opportunities](#).
2. Eligible applicants submit the grant application via Qualtrics by the specified deadline in this document.
3. Grant applications are reviewed and scored. Note: The highest scoring applicants may be required to attend an oral interview or respond to questions regarding their IDC application.
4. TEA announces applicants selected for funding on the TEA [Grants Awarded Data](#) webpage.
5. Applicants selected for funding will be required to submit and certify an eGrants funding application including assurances and a budget summary to receive funding. Note: All data submitted in the grant application is incorporated into the eGrants funding application under the Notice of Grant Award (NOGA).
6. TEA staff conducts budget negotiations on the IDC application.
7. Notice of Grant Award (NOGA) issued upon successful completion of the negotiation process.

Contact for Clarifying Information

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), TEA Contacts.

The following TEA staff member should be contacted with questions:

Grant Program Contact

Program manager name	Scott Taylor
Program manager title	Director of School Improvement Strategy and Support
Program manager email	SIDivision@tea.texas.gov
Program manager phone	512-463-5226

Additional Program Contact

Program manager name	Kristi Michaels
Program manager title	Director of HQIM Implementation Supports
Program manager email	strongfoundations@tea.texas.gov
Program manager phone	512-470-9235

Additional Program Contact

Program manager name	Gloria Matthews
Program manager title	Strong Foundations Implementation Program Lead
Program manager email	strongfoundations@tea.texas.gov
Program manager phone	512-463-7942

Funding Contact

Program manager name	Competitive Grants Unit
Program manager title	Grants Administration Division
Program manager email	competitivegrants@tea.texas.gov
Program manager phone	512-463-8525

U.S. Department of Education and/or State Appropriations

The following is provided in compliance with the U.S. Department of Education Appropriations Act:

CATEGORY	AMOUNT
Total funds available for this project	\$14,000,000*
Percentage to be financed with federal funds	100%
Amount of federal funds	\$14,000,000*
Percentage to be financed from nonfederal sources	0%
Amount of nonfederal funds	\$0

* Should additional funding become available for this program, the agency may add it to the base amount indicated above and fund additional qualifying awardees till all funding is exhausted

Timeline

For all dates related to the grant, including reporting dates, see the [TEA Grant Opportunities](#) page. If a report due date falls on a weekend or holiday, the report will be due the following business day. All dates except the grant ending date may vary slightly as conditions require.

Date	Event
October 1, 2024 at 10:00 a.m.	General Webinar Option 1 Registration link can be found on the LASO 3 website .
October 3, 2024 at 3:00 p.m.	General Webinar Option 2 Registration link can be found on the LASO 3 website .
October 14, 2024	Grant application available LASO individual application links will be emailed to Superintendents on October 14, 2024. Please see the LASO 3 website for more information.
October 18, 2024 at 12:00 p.m.	Program Specific Webinar Option 1 Registration link can be found on the LASO 3 website .
October 22, 2024 at 12:00 p.m.	Program Specific Webinar Option 2 Registration link can be found on the LASO 3 website .
November 1, 2024	Deadline to submit questions for the final FAQ document Applicants may email their questions to the LASO central inbox at LASO@tea.texas.gov .
November 13, 2024	FAQ Publishing The FAQs for this grant program will be posted to the TEA Grant Opportunities page and LASO website no later than the date listed on the Grant Timeline. See General and Fiscal Guidelines , Frequently Asked Questions.
December 13, 2024	Due date for the IDC Qualtrics application The LASO 3 application must be received by the TEA by 5:00 p.m., Central Time. See General and Fiscal Guidelines , LASO 3 Application Due Date and Time.
December 20, 2024 - January 30, 2025	Application review period, including interviews if necessary See General and Fiscal Guidelines , Review Process.
February 20, 2025	Anticipated award announcement
February 20, 2025	eGrants ADC and Application opens for awarded applicants
March 1, 2025	Beginning date of grant (if selected for funding) See General and Fiscal Guidelines , Grant Period.
March 24, 2025	Due Date for eGrants Application
June 2, 2026	Last day to amend grant (if selected for funding) See General and Fiscal Guidelines , Grant Period.
August 31, 2026	End date of grant (if selected for funding) See General and Fiscal Guidelines , Grant Period.

Grant at a Glance

This section provides fundamental information pertinent to the grant program.

Authorizing Legislation

This grant is authorized by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Title I, Part A, Section 1003.

Where to Submit the Grant Application

LASO individual application links will be emailed to Superintendents on October 14, 2024. Please see the [LASO 3 website](#) for more information.

Purpose of Program

SFI School Improvement PLC Supports provides direct grant funds to LEAs for technical assistance for Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to support high-fidelity implementation of the Texas open education resource (OER) instructional materials in Title I and Federally Identified campuses participating in Strong Foundations Implementation (SFI).

Eligible Applicants

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), Eligibility for Funding.

Eligible applicants are LEAs awarded Strong Foundations Implementation (SFI) implementing approved core instructional materials in eligible campuses in school year 2025-26. In order to be considered for the SFI SI PLC Supports grant, LEAs must also apply for the SFI grant.

Approved core instructional materials pending approval by the State Board of Education through the Instructional Materials Review and Approval (IMRA) process include:

- Bluebonnet Learning K-5 Reading Language Arts, Edition 1
- Bluebonnet Learning K-5 Math, Edition 1
- Bluebonnet Learning Secondary Mathematics, Edition 1 (Grades 6-8 and Algebra I)

Additional pilot approved core instructional materials include:

- Aprendizaje Bluebonnet Artes del lenguaje y lectura K-5, Edición 1
- Aprendizaje Bluebonnet Matemáticas K-5, Edición 1

Note: Previous approved core instructional materials in K-5 RLA (K-5 OER RLA COVID Emergency Release V3, also called Amplify Texas Elementary Literacy Program/Amplify Texas Lectoescritura en Español) and/or K-5 Math (K-5 OER Math COVID Emergency Release V2, also called Eureka Math TEKS Edition) and/or 6-12 Math (6-12 OER Math COVID Emergency Release V2, also called Carnegie Learning 6-12 Texas Math Solution) are not eligible.

Eligible campuses include campuses that are Title I served with a 2024 federal accountability identification, including Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI), Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI), or Additional Targeted Support (ATS). Comprehensive campuses in their second year of identification (Comprehensive Reidentified or Comprehensive Progress) are also eligible. Campuses must remain in operation during the grant cycle and remain Title I served for the 2025-26 school year.

Note: an LEA is eligible to apply to both Strong Foundations Implementation (SFI) and Instructional Leadership (IL) grants, but in the event that both are awarded, the LEA must select ~~their ESC~~ the same Approved Provider for both SFI and IL as the Approved Provider for both SFI and IL. SFI programming will be limited to support of OER implementation and IL programming will be limited to non-OER support.

Education Service Centers (ESCs) are not eligible to apply.

Eligibility List

There is an eligibility list and it is posted in the Application and Support Information section of the [TEA Grant Opportunities](#) page.

Shared Services Arrangement

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), Shared Services Arrangements.

Shared services arrangements (SSAs) are not allowed.

Application Funding

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), Continuation Funding, Fund Management, and Use of Funds.

It is anticipated that 100 to 180 campuses will be awarded grants of approximately \$75,000*-\$150,000*, to be determined at a later date, per campus per awarded instructional material. The grant award is in addition to the Strong Foundations Implementation grant award.

* Should additional funding become available for this program, the agency may add it to the base amount indicated above and fund additional qualifying awardees till all funding is exhausted

Selection of Applicants for Funding

Applicants will be selected in rank order.

Cost Share or Matching Requirement

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), Cost Share/Match Requirement.

There is no cost share or matching requirement for this grant program.

Supplement, Not Supplant

For supplement, not supplant guidance, see the Supplement, Not Supplant Handbook on the Department of Grant Compliance and Administration's [Training and Other Resources](#) page.

The supplement, not supplant provision does apply to this grant program.

Limitation of Administrative Funds

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), Administrative Costs.

Note: Administrative funds include **both** direct administrative costs **and** allowable indirect costs.

Direct Administrative Costs

TEA limits the amount of direct administrative costs for this Grant program to no more than 15% of the total Grant award.

Indirect Costs

For this federally funded Grant, the Grantee may claim a maximum for indirect costs equal to its current approved restricted indirect cost rate.

To calculate the maximum indirect costs that can be claimed for a Grant, complete the [Maximum Indirect Costs Worksheet](#), located on the Grants Administration Division's [Grant Resources](#) page.

Pre-Award Costs

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), Pre-Award Costs.

Pre-award costs are not permitted for this grant.

Grant Application

This section identifies the types of requirements in which applicants must comply to be eligible for funding:

- Statutory requirements (requirements defined in the authorizing statute)

- TEA program requirements (requirements defined by TEA program staff)

Statutorily Required Responses

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), Statutory Requirements.

There are no statutory required responses for this Grant opportunity.

TEA Application Required Responses

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), TEA Program Requirements.

Applicants must include the following in the application:

- Agree to meet all program-specific assurances
- Select which instructional material(s) the LEA is applying for
- Select the specific eligible campuses implementing each applicable instructional material (eligible campuses are Title I served with a 2024 federal accountability identification)
- Confirm campuses in the grant application will remain in operation throughout the grant cycle and remain Title I served for the 2025-26 and 2026-27 school years

Statutory and Program-Specific Assurances

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), Provisions and Assurances.

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 assures 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 assures to adhere to all the Statutory and TEA Program requirements as noted in the Program Guidelines.
4. The applicant assures to adhere to all the Performance Measures, as noted in the 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 they accept and will comply with Every Student Succeeds Act Provisions and Assurances requirements
6. 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.
7. The applicant acknowledges that Per Section 22.0834 of the Texas Education Code (TEC), any person offered employment by any entity that contracts with TEA or receives Grant funds administered by TEA (i.e., a Grantee or subGrantee) is subject to the fingerprinting requirement. TEA is prohibited from awarding Grant funds to any entity, including nonprofit organizations, that fails to comply with this requirement. For details, refer to the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), Fingerprinting Requirement.
8. The applicant ensures the LEA will maintain current contact information in AskTED to ensure timely communication.
9. The applicant acknowledges the LEA should draw down approximately 25% of the grant amount quarterly to remain on-track for grant expenditures.
10. The applicant assures the LEA will meet all program-specific assurances (in addition to meeting all SFI assurances), including:

- a. Ensuring approval by the Superintendent and Chief Academic Officer (or equivalent leader) to participate in the program
- b. Contracting with an Approved Provider from the LASO Cycle 3 Approved Provider List for Strong Foundations Implementation
- c. Submitting Approved Provider contracts and required funding summary reports to TEA
- d. Appointing a campus lead for each participating campus as the primary point of contact responsible for all grant-related activities and designating at least one additional point of contact
- e. Ensuring attendance and engagement by the campus lead at periodic check-ins with the Approved Provider
- f. Ensuring attendance and engagement by the District Coordinator of School Improvement (DCSI) at period check-ins with the Approved Provider
- g. Submitting a Targeted Improvement Plan during SY 25-26
- h. Ensuring teachers are able to attend all Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)
- i. Appointing at least 1 PLC facilitator per campus who assumes responsibility for facilitating PLCs through a gradual release of responsibility model
- j. Ensuring participating campus leads, PLC facilitators, and teachers complete all program requirements
- k. Submitting all required data
- l. Attending meetings with the TEA School Improvement team and/or TEA Strong Foundations Implementation team as requested
- m. Including the TEA School Improvement team and/or TEA Strong Foundations Implementation team and/or Education Service Center School Improvement representative on learning walks as requested

Program Elements

Description of Program

The vision for Strong Foundations is for all Texas students to have access to rigorous, grade-level content and instruction every day. Strong Foundations Implementation supports LEAs in implementing Texas open education resource (OER) instructional materials to provide students access to high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) and high-quality instruction.

Strong Foundations Implementation School Improvement PLC Supports provides direct grant funds to LEAs for technical assistance for Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to support high-fidelity implementation of the Texas OER instructional materials in Title I and Federally Identified campuses participating in Strong Foundations Implementation.

Technical assistance includes:

- Support in developing campus-level implementation action plans

- Facilitation of a minimum of 20 PLCs over the school year focused on internalization of the Texas OER instructional materials, including support for a campus PLC facilitator through a gradual release of responsibility
- Learning walks with school leaders/campus administrators to understand implementation fidelity and progress

LEAs are required to use:

- 50% of grant funds to contract with a single Approved Provider per instructional material from the LASO Cycle 3 Approved Provider List for Strong Foundations Implementation to support grant activities (LEAs must contract with the same Approved Provider for both SFI and SFI SI PLC Supports)
- 50% of grant funds for additional support from the Approved Provider and/or salaries, partial salaries, or stipends for instructional coaches or other positions directly supporting PLC facilitation and implementation of the instructional materials

Performance and Evaluation Measures

The LEA must submit data as requested by TEA, in accordance with TEA guidance, including, but not limited to:

- Teacher identification numbers, including Texas Unique ID
- Class rosters from each campus for each teacher indicating students enrolled at the beginning of the school year and at the end of the school year
- Deliverables submissions using TEA-provided templates
- Surveys of teachers, coaches, school leaders/campus administrators, and LEA leads prior to and during the school year administered by TEA

Limits on Contracted Evaluators

Applicants should make every effort to ensure that contracted evaluators are independent and objective.

Allowable Activities and Use of Funds

Refer to the [Budgeting Costs Guidance Handbook](#) on the Grants Administration Division's [Grant Resources](#) page for general guidance on allowable activities and use of funds.

Allowable activities and use of funds for this Grant include only the following:

General Allowable Activities and Use of Funds

- Payroll costs
- Professional and contracted services
- Consumable and durable supplies and materials

LEAs are required to use 50% of grant funds to contract with a single Approved Provider per instructional material from the LASO Cycle 3 Approved Provider List for Strong Foundations Implementation to support grant activities (LEAs must contract with the same Approved Provider for both SFI and SFI SI PLC Supports); and

50% of grant funds for additional support from the Approved Provider and/or salaries, partial salaries, or stipends for instructional coaches or other positions directly supporting PLC facilitation and implementation of the instructional materials.

Unallowable Activities and Use of Funds

Refer to the [Budgeting Costs Guidance Handbook](#) on the Grants Administration Division's [Grant Resources](#) page for general guidance on unallowable costs.

- Out-of-state travel
- Travel for students to conferences
- Field trips
- Stipends for non-employees
- Non-employee costs for conferences
- Travel costs for officials such as executive director, superintendent, or board members
- Cost of membership in any civic or community organization
- Hosting or sponsoring of conferences
- Advisory council

In addition, unallowable activities and use of funds for this Grant include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Debt services (lease liabilities for terms greater than 12 months) — unallowable costs include:
 - a. Capital Lease Liability — Principal Costs (6512)
 - b. Capital Lease Liability – Interest Costs (6522)
 - c. Interest on Debt Costs (6523)
- Capital outlay
- Operating transfers out

Other unallowable expenses include, as applicable to the core instructional material(s) awarded:

- Expenses that support the use of Tier 1 instructional materials other than the core approved instructional materials, including previous core approved products in K-5 RLA (K-5 OER RLA COVID Emergency Release V3, currently called Amplify Texas Elementary Literacy Program/Amplify Texas Lectoescritura en Español) and/or K-5 Math (K-5 OER Math COVID Emergency Release V2, currently called Eureka Math TEKS Edition) and/or 6-12 Math (6-12 OR Math COVID Emergency Release V2, currently called Carnegie Learning 6-12 Texas Math Solution)
- Expenses for PLCs not directly related to implementation of the core approved instructional materials
- Contracts with a provider not included on the LASO Cycle 3 Approved Provider List for Strong Foundations Implementation
- Stipends or salaries for positions not directly supporting implementation of the core approved instructional materials
- Expenses for print materials (including print materials of the core approved instructional materials)
- Expenses for licenses for supplemental materials (including licenses for approved supplemental materials)

- Expenses for materials and supplies not directly related to implementation of the core approved instructional materials
- Expenses for technology (e.g., computers)
- Expenses for in-state travel

Federal Grant Requirements

Equitable Access and Participation

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), Equitable Access and Participation.

This requirement does not apply to this federally funded Grant program.

Private Nonprofit School Participation

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), Private Nonprofit School Participation.

This requirement does not apply to this federally funded Grant program.

Maintenance of Effort

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), Maintenance of Effort.

This requirement does not apply to this federally funded Grant program.

Attachments

There are two types of attachments that may be required to be submitted with your Qualtrics application:

Required Program-Related Attachments

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), Required Program-Related Attachments, for a general description of program-related documents that can be required as attachments to the application.

No program-related attachments are required for this Grant program.

Required Fiscal-Related Attachments

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), Fiscal-Related Documentation Required to Be on File, for a general description of fiscal-related documents that can be required as attachments to the application.

This requirement does not apply to this grant.

LASO Scoring and Review

This section provides information on the scoring and review of LASO applications.

LASO Review and Funding Criteria

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), *Review Criteria*

Standard GRANT Review Criteria	Description	Maximum Points Available
STAAR Scores	Rank order from lowest to highest using 3 rd grade RLA STAAR scores for K-5 RLA applications, 3 rd grade Math STAAR scores for K-5 Math applications, and Algebra I STAAR scores for 6-8 Math applications	n/a
CSI Campuses	Campuses with a 2024 federal accountability identification of Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI), Comprehensive Reidentified, or Comprehensive Progress.	1 st priority tier
ATS Campuses	Campuses with a 2024 federal accountability identification of Additional Targeted Support (ATS)	2 nd priority tier
TSI Campuses	Campuses with a 2024 federal accountability identification of Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI)	3 rd priority tier
Total Standard Review Points Possible		n/a

Priority Points

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), *Priorities for Funding*.

All eligible applicants will be categorized in priority tiers as noted above with grant funds awarded as follows:

- Grant funds will be awarded to applicants in the 1st priority tier based on rank order of STAAR scores from lowest to highest.
- After the applicants in the 1st priority tier have been funded, grant funds will be awarded to applicants in the 2nd priority tier based on rank order of STAAR scores from lowest to highest.
- After the applicants in the 2nd priority tier have been funded, grant funds will be awarded to applicants in the 3rd priority tier based on rank order of STAAR scores from lowest to highest.

Oral Interviews for Funding

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), *Oral Interviews for Funding*.

During the virtual oral interviews (if needed), applicants will have the opportunity to elaborate and be evaluated on the topics below, as well as answer any additional questions which TEA may have to assess their readiness for the grant program. The applicant may reference any documents, including the Program Guidelines and FAQs:

- Systems Alignment (50%): Including, but not limited to, instructional time, planning time, and assessment strategy.
- Support Models (50%): Including, but not limited to, coaching supports and observation and feedback practices.

If a LEA qualifies for multiple Curriculum and Instruction bundled grants, then the following criteria will be used to grant multiple grants.

- Readiness: LEAs provide plan on how these programs would successfully co-exist.
- Resource considerations: LEAs provide plan for staffing resources to execute multiple programs well.
- Past success: LEAs provide success data for prior participation.

The LEA may be asked to submit evidence for the above criteria, and/or invited to a virtual interview to determine best-fit grants, if deemed necessary by the TEA.