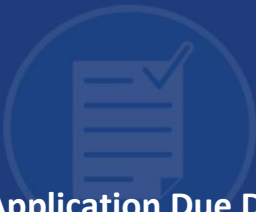# LASO Cycle 3 (2024-2025)

Learning Acceleration Support Opportunities

2024-2025 Strong Foundations Planning Grant

Program Guidelines

Revised 03/25/25

Authorized by General Appropriations Act (GAA), Article III, Rider 76, 88th Texas Legislature, 2023. General Appropriations Act (GAA), Article III, Rider 94, 88th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, 2023.

Grant Application Due Date
December 13, 2024; 5:00 p.m. CST

TEA
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Grant Program Guidelines

Grant Name as it will appear on the TEA Grant Opportunities Page	Strong Foundations Planning
Application Due Date	December 13, 2024; 5:00 p.m. CT
Program Authority	General Appropriations Act (GAA), Article III, Rider 76, 88th Texas Legislature, 2023. General Appropriates Act (GAA), Article III, Rider 94, 88th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, 2023.

Introduction

TEA, as the pass-through entity[1], is the grantee[2] from the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) and TEA awards subgrants to non-federal entities[3] 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 subgrantees[4]. 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.

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[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	Hannah Cox
Program manager title	Director of HQIM Adoption
Program manager email	strongfoundations@tea.texas.gov
Program manager phone	512-463-6673

Additional Program Contact

Program manager name	Jessica Foulke
Program manager title	Strong Foundations Planning Program Lead
Program manager email	strongfoundations@tea.texas.gov
Program manager phone	512-463-9500

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	$23,800,000
Percentage to be financed with federal funds	0%
Amount of federal funds	$0
Percentage to be financed from nonfederal sources	100%
Amount of nonfederal funds	$23,800,000

* 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 11:00 a.m.	**Program Specific Webinar Option 1** Registration link can be found on the LASO 3 website.
October 22, 2024 at 11:00 a.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**
February 20, 2025	**Beginning date of grant (if selected for funding)** See General and Fiscal Guidelines, Grant Period.
April 7, 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 General Appropriations Act (GAA), Article III, Rider 76, 88th Texas Legislature, 2023; General Appropriates Act (GAA), Article III, Rider 94, 88th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, 2023.

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

Strong Foundations Planning provides direct grant funds to LEAs for technical assistance to develop a strong instructional framework in math or literacy based in the research-based instructional strategies (RBIS) to guide teaching and learning in the LEA.

Eligible Applicants

See the General and Fiscal Guidelines, Eligibility for Funding.

Eligible applicants are LEAs. LEAs that previously participated in the Strong Foundations Framework Development Grant in SY2022-23 and/or Strong Foundations Planning Grant in SY2023-24 and/or SY2024-25 are not eligible to apply for the same content area awarded in previous grant cycles. Prior grantees are eligible to apply for a new content area.

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

Eligibility List

There is not an eligibility list for this grant.

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 200 applicants will be awarded grants ranging from $120,000 to $300,000 per LEA with funding based on LEA size:

- Very Small (1 – 1,599 enrollment): $120,000
- Small (1,600 – 4,999 enrollment): $140,000
- Small Medium (5,000 – 9,999 enrollment): $160,000
- Medium Large (10,000 – 24,999): $180,000
- Large (25,000 – 49,999 enrollment): $200,000
- Very Large (50,000+ enrollment): $300,000

* 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 not 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.

TEA limits the amount of funds that may be budgeted to administer the program, including direct administrative costs and indirect costs, to no more than 15% of the total Grant awarded.

For this state-funded Grant, the Grantee may claim a maximum for indirect costs equal to **the lesser** of its current, approved restricted indirect cost rate or 15%.

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 for Strong Foundations Planning
- Confirm if the LEA has participated in previous grant cycles for each content area (LEAs are not eligible to apply for the same content area awarded in previous grant cycles)
- Select which content area the LEA is applying for (LEAs may only apply for one content area)

Statutory and Program-Specific Assurances

See the General and Fiscal Guidelines, Provisions and Assurances.

1. 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.
2. The applicant assures to adhere to all the Statutory and TEA Program requirements as noted in the Program Guidelines.
3. 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.

4. 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.

5. 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.

6. The applicant assures the LEA will maintain current contact information in AskTED to ensure timely communication.

7. The applicant acknowledges the LEA should draw down approximately 25% of the grant amount quarterly to remain on-track for grant expenditures.

8. The applicant assures the LEA will meet all program-specific 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 Planning
   c. Submitting Approved Provider contracts and required funding summary reports to TEA
   d. Appointing a LEA lead as the primary point of contact for all grant-related activities and designating at least one additional point of contact
   e. Forming a leadership team that includes representation from key leaders in the LEA
   f. Forming a stakeholder committee that includes representation from key stakeholders in the LEA (e.g., board members, district leaders, school leaders/campus administrators, curriculum specialists, instructional coaches, teachers, families/caregivers, community members), including representation from general education, special education, and emergent bilingual stakeholders
   g. Ensuring all members of the leadership team and stakeholder committee complete the required research-based instructional strategies (RBIS) collective learning series
   h. Ensuring the Superintendent and/or Chief Academic Officer (or equivalent leader) participate in required trainings and monthly communities of practice
   i. Submitting all required grant deliverables (e.g., roadmap, instructional framework, instructional framework rollout plan)
   j. Ensuring approval by the Superintendent and Chief Academic Officer (or equivalent leader) of the instructional framework and instructional framework rollout plan
   k. Submitting all required data and agreeing to the leadership team and/or stakeholder committee participating in focus groups upon TEA request

Program Elements

Description of Program

The vision of Strong Foundations is for all Texas students to have access to rigorous, grade-level content and instruction every day. Strong Foundations Planning provides direct grant funds to LEAs for technical assistance to develop a strong instructional framework in math or literacy based in the research-based instructional strategies (RBIS) to guide key decisions about teaching and learning in the LEA.

Technical assistance includes:
- Support in developing a roadmap for the instructional framework development process
- Facilitation of a collective learning series with the leadership team and stakeholder committee on the math or literacy RBIS
- Support in creating a vision, identifying key beliefs, gathering input from stakeholders, and developing a RBIS-aligned instructional framework in math or literacy
- Support in conducting a diagnostic of the current state of instructional materials and instruction
- Support in developing an instructional framework rollout plan and deciding whether to adopt high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) to achieve the instructional goals of the LEA

LEAs are required to use:
- 50% of grant funds to contract with a single Approved Provider from the LASO Cycle 3 Approved Provider List for Strong Foundations Planning to support grant activities
- 20% of grant funds for additional support from the Approved Provider and/or salaries or partial salaries for project managers, instructional coaches, or other positions directly supporting grant activities
- 30% of grant funds for other allowable expenses (e.g., stipends for stakeholder committee members)

Performance and Evaluation Measures

The LEA must submit data as requested by TEA, in accordance with TEA guidance, including, but not limited to:
- Deliverables submissions
- Exit tickets from the collective learning series
- Surveys of leadership teams and stakeholder committees 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 Strong Foundations Planning Approved Provider to support grant activities; 20% of grant funds for additional support from the Approved Provider and/or salaries or partial salaries for project managers, instructional coaches, or other positions directly supporting grant activities; and 30% of grant funds for other allowable expenses.

Other allowable expenses include:
- Additional support from the Approved Provider
- Salary or partial salary for a project manager to support grant activities
- Salary or partial salary for instructional coaches to support grant activities
- Stipends for stakeholder committee members
- Academic reviews from the Center for Academic Review
- Materials and supplies needed to support the collective learning series
- In-state travel to support grant activities (e.g., site visits to HQIM Learning Labs)

Other Allowable Operating Costs Requiring Specific Approval in the Grant Application (6400)

Travel Costs for Officials such as Executive Director, Superintendent, or Board Members

Travel costs for officials such as executive director, superintendent, or board members may be funded under the Grant program.

Only the following travel costs may be allowable for these positions:
- Travel associated with the grant activities. Travel expenses are capped at 5% of the 30% discretionary spending allotment (1.5% of their total award)

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 that is <u>not</u> associated with the grant activities
- 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)
  d. Audit services for state-funded Grants
- Contracts with a provider not included on the LASO Cycle 3 Approved Provider List for Strong Foundations Planning
- Stipends or salaries for positions not directly supporting grant activites
- Expenses for in-state travel not directly related to grant activities

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 3rd grade RLA STAAR scores for literacy applications and 3rd grade Math STAAR scores for math applications	n/a
LEAs with Board of Managers, Monitor, or Conservator for Academic Performance	LEAs with a Commissioner-appointed board of managers, monitor, or conservator for academic performance	1st priority tier
LEAs Classified as Rural	LEAs classified as rural as defined as (a) enrollment of between 300 and the median district enrollment of the state and an enrollment growth rate over the past five years of less than 20 percent, or (b) enrollment of less than 300 students	2nd priority tier
LEAs in the Top Quartile of Economically Disadvantaged Students	LEAs in the top quartile of economically disadvantaged students in the state as defined as eligibility to participate in the national free or reduced-price lunch program	3rd 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.
- After the applicants in the 3rd priority tier have been funded, grant funds will be awarded to other applicants 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.

- Vision (50%): Including, but not limited to, vision for how grant will support the long-term growth of student instructional achievement.
- System Readiness (50%): Including, but not limited to commitment of the Superintendent and Chief Academic Officer (or equivalent leader) for engaging in the grant activities.