



2019-2021 School Action Fund - Implementation

COMPETITIVE GRANT Application Due 5:00 p.m. CT, May 2, 2019

NOGA ID [redacted]

Authorizing legislation

P.L. 107-110, Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Section 1003(g)

Applicants must submit one original copy of the application and two copies of the application (for a total of three copies of the application). All three copies of the application MUST bear the signature of a person authorized to bind the applicant to a contractual agreement. **Applications cannot be emailed.** Applications must be received no later than the above-listed application due date and time at:

Document Control Center, Grants Administration Division
Texas Education Agency
1701 N. Congress Avenue
Austin, TX 78701-1494

Application stamp-in date and time

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TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY
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Grant period from

July 1, 2019 to July 31, 2021

Pre-award costs are not permitted.

Required Attachments

No attachments are required to be submitted with this application.

Amendment Number

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

Applicant Information

Organization	Freer Independent School District	CDN	066903	Vendor ID	74-159618	ESC	2	DUNS	127749463
Address	905 S Norton Ave.		City	Freer	ZIP	78357	Phone	361-394-6025	
Primary Contact	Conrad Cantu		Email	ccantu@freerisd.net		Phone	361-394-6025		
Secondary Contact	Linda Hinojosa		Email	lhinojosa@freerisd.net		Phone	361-394-6025		

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 Conrad Cantu Title Superintendent

Email ccantu@freerisd.net Phone 361-394-6025

Signature Conrad Cantu Date 4/29/19

Grant Writer Name Conrad Cantu Signature Conrad Cantu Date 4/29/19

Grant writer is an employee of the applicant organization. Grant writer is not an employee of the applicant organization.

RFA # **701-19-106**

SAS # **437-20**

2019-2021 School Action Fund - Implementation

701-19-106-010

2019-019722

Shared Services Arrangements

SSAs are **not permitted** for this grant.

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
Freer High School had low percentages of students who achieved a Meets or Masters grade level standards on STAAR EOC - 26% in Reading; 10% in Math; 32% in Science; and 49% in Social Studies.	The Leadership Team will develop a system to provide teachers with training and coaching on the use of vetted resources, informative data analysis, and quality comprehensive Tier I planning and instruction.
The overall College, Career, and Military Ready Rate was 39%, which impacted Domains 1, 2, & 3.	Partnership with the Rural Schools Innovation Zone (RSIZ) will give students access to multiple career pathways that interest them. The Campus Leadership Team will spearhead the development of a monitoring system to guide students in meeting requirements for CCMR.
There is a limited access to high-quality (A and B rated) schools in the geographical area.	Partnership with RSIZ will replicate a high-quality charter model which has demonstrated success in Premont ISD to increase performance to at least a B rating in two years.

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 2021-2022, Freer High School will increase its state accountability rating to a B under the Texas accountability system.

The purpose of this work and the goal is to increase the number of students in A and B rated schools by 50%. This grant will enable us to make this possible not only for student in our district but for students across the geographical region who will have access to the campus.

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

- 100% of students interested in a pathway at another school are actively attending that program
- Career pathway coursework and information is clearly available to students and families
- 80% of high-school students are aware of pathway choices available to them as measured by a student survey
- 100% of staff members have been introduced to the professional development system and can articulate their role and purpose in the system
- 100% of instructional staff members are fully participating in formalized PLCs

Measurable Progress (Cont.)

Second-Quarter Benchmark

- By the end of each month, 100% of teachers will document student acquisition and deficiencies of student expectations with documented lesson plans to adjust accordingly
- Monthly, 100% of teachers will analyze students' data and make necessary adjustments to curriculum and instruction
- 100% of teachers will guide 100% of their students in the tracking of grades, TEKS, goals, and progress every 3 weeks
- 90% of high-school students are aware of pathway choices available to them as measured by a student survey

Third-Quarter Benchmark

- 100% of Professional Development System components will be measured with student data and adjusted accordingly for continuous improvement in increasing the percentages of students achieving grade level standards in all subjects.
- 100% of high-school students are aware of pathway choices available to them as measured by a student survey

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.

The summative SMART goal and benchmarks will be continuously monitored by RSIZ staff, school leaders, district staff and the board. School leaders will have access to comprehensive data dashboards that enable the use of real-time data to inform campus decision making. Dashboards will incorporate information from all schools, collaborating institutions of higher education and certification partners and provide clear and up-to-date data on each student's progress throughout their experience to ensure they are on track. School leadership will have the autonomy, with support from RSIZ and district staff, to adjust school and classroom strategies as we work towards our goals. In addition to these school based supports, RSIZ staff will assume a project manager role to ensure that our professional development benchmarks remain on track and that principals and teachers are well supported throughout the process.

Freer ISD has reflected these and other goals in the performance contract giving operational authority to the Rural Schools Innovation Zone. Failure to meet the agreed upon goals in the agreed upon time-frame may lead to probation or revocation of the operating contract.

The authorized partner will continuously use evaluation data to ensure that the program can be effectively modified for sustainability.

As the authorizer, the board of trustees will conduct an annual review of the charter and will formally determine renewal or revocation decisions every 3 years. The district will make decisions based on a school action planning process in context of the state accountability system and a school performance framework. We will enhance this competency through participation in the Texas Authorizer Leadership Academy (TALA).

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.

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.

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.

The applicant provides assurance to adhere to all Statutory Requirements and TEA Program Requirements as noted in the 2019-2021 School Action Fund - Implementation Program Guidelines.

The applicant provides assurance to adhere to all Performance Measures, as noted in the 2019-2021 School Action Fund - Implementation Program Guidelines, and shall provide the Texas Education Agency and the matched school action technical assistance provider, upon request, any performance data necessary to assess the success of the program.

The applicant provides assurance that it will contract and work in good faith with the TEA vetted and matched school action technical assistance provider and agency-provided technical assistance.

The applicant will budget at least 25% of the total award as "Matched School Action Technical Assistance Provider" on schedule 6200.

The applicant assures that contracts with matched school action technical assistance provider will be negotiated and signed by October 1, 2019.

The applicant assures that a project manager will be identified. Please note: this position may be funded other grant funds.

The LEAs pursuing a partner-managed model assure that a financial spending analysis will be performed in accordance with TEA requirements.

The applicant assures that all fidelity of implementation revisions will be complete on or before October 15, 2019.

The applicant assures access will be provided for onsite visits to the LEA and campus by TEA and its contractors.

The applicant assures attendance and participation in grant orientation meetings, technical assistance meetings, other periodic meetings of grantees, and sharing of best practices through the TEA program office.

The applicant assures partners operating campuses under the partner-managed option must commit to Lone Star Governance participation.

The applicant assures Pre-K "New Schools" will designate a feeder comprehensive campus by May 1, 2020.

For LEAs pursuing the Create a new school action model: The applicant assures enrollment at a new school must prioritize students attending or zoned to a 2018-2019 Comprehensive and/or Targeted school.

For LEAs pursuing the Partner-managed model: The applicant assures commitment to the Adoption of Model Authorizing policy and participation in the Texas Authorizer Leadership Academy.

Standard 1: School Redesign

Please refer to the Program Guidelines page 8 and address the six questions below:

1)

To carry out its school support and improvement activities, Freer ISD has partnered Freer High School to be operated by the Rural Schools Innovation Zone (RSIZ). The mission of the RSIZ is to provide rural students high-quality opportunities for post-secondary success, which will help RSIZ achieve its vision and thus reinvent the rural education experience. The partnership will empower educators with the tools to adapt to their students' individual needs strategically, flexibly, and quickly. This operator autonomy, along with the greater access to expertise and resources that the RSIZ partnership will enable, will allow Freer High School to accelerate student academic achievement and help serve students effectively. In addition to the focus on operator autonomy, the RSIZ partner high schools will each offer a specialized academy open to any student within the Zone. By carefully analyzing the workforce needs in Freer and in the broader region, Freer High School and the RSIZ partners will be able to work together with institutions of higher education and other partners to implement high-quality programming that will provide excellent opportunities to students. The inclusion of additional districts will benefit students because it will expand the opportunities available to them and lead to more effective preparation for college and career. The LEA has already developed a school improvement plan in coordination with TEA.

RSIZ Strategies for improving student outcomes include: post-secondary pathways and student choice, high-quality instructional supports, teacher collaboration and talent pipelines, and strategic compensation.

2)

Describe how the LEA will monitor schools receiving Title I - Part A funds. The district and RSIZ have, and will continue to, establish milestones, identified evaluation methods, set associated indicators of accomplishments, and develop data collection processes. The milestones and associated indicators will be tied directly to the district's School Improvement Plan. By monitoring these milestones and indicators, utilizing the defined evaluation methods and data collection processes, the district will also be able to monitor the implementation of the improvement plan. Furthermore, as part of the services and support that are offered by our redesign partner we will be able to leverage additional monitoring from an external 3rd party.

a)

The milestones and associated indicators will be tied directly to the School Improvement Plan. By monitoring these milestones and indicators, utilizing the defined evaluation methods and data collection processes, the district will also be able to monitor the implementation of the improvement plan. Furthermore, as part of the services and support that are offered by our redesign partner we will be able to leverage additional monitoring from an external 3rd party.

b)

It is understood that real change takes time. Therefore, the School Improvement Plan will be designed with a multi-year approach. The School Improvement Plan will be used as a working document that will be utilized to monitor progress over time. The principal will review the school improvement plan with RSIZ director and superintendent on a regular basis and will be provided with regular updates on the implementation of the plan. If needed, revisions will be made that are necessary to ensure the plans stay on course. Changes may include adjusting the time table and/or changes to operational practices leveraged by the performance contract with the RSIZ.

3)

Freer ISD will utilize TEA's model Call for Quality Schools in any future partnership to ensure that we will recruit, screen, select, and evaluate school redesign partners using a rigorous process.

Statutory Requirement (Cont'd)

4)

Freer ISD will align and complement existing school improvement resources, goals, and interventions including: personnel, technology and infrastructure, curriculum, software, facilities, and training in order to support and effectively deliver a comprehensive School Improvement Plan. All resources allocated to Freer High School will be utilized in support of the School Improvement Plan and the goals of the campus, district, and RSIZ.

Freer ISD will maintain a strategic focus and alignment among this grant with future grants and with past grants where possible. This alignment will embolden the district to ensure that social emotional learning is not lost from the overall academic strategy.

5)

The district has signed and executed a formal contract with the Rural Schools Innovation Zone to operate Freer High School through a Sub-chapter C authorization with complete operational flexibility to implement an effective restart. District and campus data illustrates that Freer High School has a unique student population that has its own unique obstacles and needs. Therefore, Freer High School and the RSIZ will be provided the flexibility to modify their campus policies and instructional methods in order to improve student outcomes.

The partnership with the RSIZ will empower educators with the tools to adapt to their students' individual needs strategically, flexibly, and quickly. Thus, autonomous practices help districts, or a partnership of districts like the RSIZ, design schools around the needs of students. This autonomy, along with the greater access to expertise and resources that the RSIZ partnership will enable, will allow Freer High School to accelerate student academic achievement and help serve students effectively.

6)

We have selected to restart Freer High School under the partnership-managed model. In alignment with this school action model, Freer High School and the Rural Schools Innovation Zone will incorporate evidence-based strategies during the implementation of the program that are proven to:

- (1) Increase teachers and school leaders' knowledge and self-confidence so they are equipped to manage student' behavior in and out of the classroom, motivate students to take a more active role in their studies, and implement new teaching strategies;
- (2) Provide teachers, students, and school leaders access to the latest research-based technology and curriculum that is geared to prepare students to be an active member of today's 21st century society; and
- (3) offer a strong support system to new and struggling teachers so that they can bring about improvements in student outcomes.

Some of these strategies include: Improving Tier 1 instruction through Kagan and multiple other instructional strategies, and more effectively analyzing data to strengthen tier 2 and tier 3 instruction.

Freer ISD and the RSIZ will also be taking action on the recommendations from TEA's Rural Schools Task force.

TEA Program Re-evaluation

Please identify one of the following eligible school action models. Once selected, please indicate whether the school action model will be district or partner-managed. *Note: The district or partner-managed option should only be selected if the LEA chooses from one of the following school action models: "Restart a struggling school" or "Create a new school". Additionally, the LEA may only select the partner-managed option for the "Replicate a successful school" model.

Select one of the following models:

- Restart a struggling school
- Create a new school
- Replicate a successful school (must select Partner-managed option)
- Reassign students from a struggling school (type of management does not apply)

Select one:

- District-managed
- Partner-managed

TEA Program Re-evaluation

A) Please describe the evaluation process and criteria utilized for selecting the school action model.

The radio buttons above are not working but please note that the model selected is a partner-managed restart.

When determining which model to select, we discussed how the school action meets the unique needs of our community, and how the action will result in an improved learning environment. Our intent is for our school actions to be more strategic, successful, and sustainable. The district will go through an annual strategic school action planning process based on the state's performance framework in order to determine that this is the formal action we will take and any future district school actions.

As a persistently struggling campus in a region with few other options for our families, partnering with the Rural Schools Innovation Zone and restarting Freer High School is the strongest option for us to leverage in our quest to improve outcomes for our students. In rural Texas the school district is the heartbeat of the community — the place we host community functions, celebrate student accomplishments, and sometimes even hold memorials for beloved community members. We are one of the largest employers in town, often hiring multiple members from a single family. There is little industry in our community and no place for our students to intern, apprentice, or be exposed to different careers or new innovations. Many in our communities sometimes drive an hour for basic family needs. In seeking innovative ways to counter these hardships our students face we presented multiple options to our community and stakeholders. In these conversations it became clear that this partnership will be the most valuable innovation we will have brought to our community in decades. While all schools face challenges, rural schools often face funding and resource constraints, have older facilities, and struggle recruiting teachers to an area where there are limited housing opportunities. We aren't always able to offer differentiated or collaborative professional learning to our staff. We may be able to offer a couple of strands of programming for career pathways, but unlike an urban or suburban district, we are limited in the offerings for our students. And yet, we need our students to be able to compete nationally and internationally. For these reasons, we've come together to provide our students with a multitude of options they would not receive in their respective districts. What we cannot do alone, we can certainly do together. Through the creation of the Rural Schools Innovation Zone, students will have the opportunity to choose from various postsecondary pathways. Brooks County, Freer, and Premont independent school districts are collaborating because we know we're stronger together, and our students deserve every opportunity for success.

We determined that we needed a model that will leverage economies of scale, provide multiple career pathway opportunities for students, provide differentiated professional development opportunities for teachers that we are unable to provide locally, and allow for representation from the Freer community

Our process for ultimately selecting this model included an initial board workshop, teacher focus groups, community forums, a public drafting of the performance contract with the RSIZ, and public comment culminating in an approving board vote.

TEA Program Requirement 2 (Cont'd)

B) Please describe the district vision for improving the campus(es) through the implementation of a school action

Our vision is to take actions that are strategic, successful, and sustainable in order to increase the number and percentage of students in A and B rated schools. We hope to be one of the first rural System of Great Schools districts in the country.

The move to transfer operation of Freer High School to the RSIZ has significant potential to improve student outcomes. There are many benefits to small schools, especially in rural communities, and this new structure will maintain these positive attributes while bringing in opportunities previously unavailable to such a small district and school. A key benefit realized by the new network structure is the ability to leverage resources to build out career and college academies at each high school campus that will be available to all RSIZ students. Students will have access to new coursework and resources in this model such as a medical academy at Freer and architecture, construction, welding, and STEM at other network campuses. The RSIZ network structure will enable districts to increase the quality of educator professional development. High-quality providers who were previously too expensive for one district to afford are now in reach with the ability to join together. Programming also has the potential to be tailored to specific regional and network needs. Increasing the quality of teacher support will have a direct impact on student outcomes. The RSIZ structure will link teachers to colleagues in their grades and content area at other campuses to engage in peer learning and work in PLCs. A larger structure also allows for the creation of new leadership positions. Leadership positions could be in a content area to enhance instructional quality and expertise. New positions not only have the potential to enhance teacher retention and satisfaction, but they can also be developed to create structures to mentor and coach newer teachers and leaders. Keeping skilled educators in the classroom and leveraging their expertise to develop the next generation of educators would greatly benefit students.

C) Please describe how this grant aligns to and accelerates the district's broader strategy and theory of action.

Freer ISD has affirmed its partnership with Premont ISD and Brooks County ISD through the Rural Schools Innovation Zone. This partnership will act as our guide as we redesign the district's broader strategy and theory of action. All of our work will align to the goals of the partnership and this grant will enable us to effectively implement the restart with efficacy. The mission of the Rural Schools Innovation Zone (RSIZ) is to provide rural students high-quality opportunities for post-secondary success, which will help RSIZ achieve its vision and thus reinvent the rural education experience. The RSIZ deeply believes that: Students from rural communities should have EVERY opportunity for access to challenging career paths to achieve high levels of postsecondary success; Rural students should be exposed to the best teachers in America; Rural schools are stronger through collaboration; and rural communities nurture big dreams through innovation. Freer ISD aims to not only serve the student but the whole community and prepare students for the jobs that will be available. This grant will enable us to create the ability to bring industry back to the region.

D) Please identify the district staff member to manage the implementation grant and the qualifications of the identified staff member.

Freer ISD has selected Frances Perez to Manage this grant. Frances is the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, overseeing all grants for Freer ISD. Frances will oversee and support all authorizing and charter review processes.

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"/>

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.

5A: 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.

5B: 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"/>
LEA's total required ESSA PNP equitable services reservation (line 7 times line 2)	<input type="text"/>

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 (6100)	BUDGET
<input type="text" value="District Payroll Costs for Implementation"/>	<input type="text" value="\$100,000"/>
<input type="text" value="School payroll costs"/>	<input type="text" value="\$400,000"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

PROFESSIONAL AND CONTRACTED SERVICES (6200)	BUDGET
<input type="text" value="TEA Matched Technical Assistance Provider"/>	<input type="text" value="\$500,000"/>
<input type="text" value="Rural Schools Innovation Zone"/>	<input type="text" value="\$800,000"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

SUPPLIES AND MATERIALS (6300)	BUDGET
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

OTHER OPERATING COSTS (6400)	BUDGET
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

CAPITAL OUTLAY (6600)	BUDGET
<input type="text" value="Funds to maintain, repair, or upgrade capital assets for a successful restart"/>	<input type="text" value="\$200,000"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Total Direct Costs

Indirect Costs

TOTAL BUDGET REQUEST (Direct Costs + Indirect Costs)