

2021-2023 ESF-Focused Support Grant Webinar FAQ

Grant eligibility and application

Q: Is this a possible continuation for the SIG funded campuses?

A: This is a new grant. Campuses that received the 2020-2021 Title I, 1003 School Improvement Grant (SIG) have the opportunity to 'opt-in' to the 2021-2022 Title I, 1003 School Improvement Grant for a new allotment and access to carryover. Eligible campuses may receive both grants.

Q: The district is applying for this grant?

A: The district applies for the grant on behalf of their eligible and interested campuses.

Q: Is there a limit on the number of campuses a district can propose for support?

A: The district can apply for all eligible campuses.

Q: Can a district make several applications? I have 67 eligible campuses.

A: The district will apply on behalf of each eligible campus. In this example, the district would complete a single Application Part 1 (PDF), a single Application Part 2 Budget Workbook (Excel), and a required supplemental attachment for each eligible applicant campus, a total of 67 in this case.

Q: If one of my campuses was awarded a TIF grant would the same campus and/or the district still be eligible for the ESF focused grant?

A: Please reach out directly to the SI Division for clarity around this question.

All campuses that are Title I-served and have a 2020 Federal Identification of Comprehensive School Support and Improvement, Targeted Support and Improvement, and/or Additional Targeted Support and Improvement are eligible for the ESF-Focused Support Grant.

Campuses that have received a School Action Fund Implementation/Continuation grant, or will be receiving one during the 2021-2022 school year are NOT eligible for the ESF-Focused Support Grant.

Q: The campus must be a TI served, and not just TI eligible, is this correct?

A: The campus must be Title I-Served.

Q: Does the campus have to be a Title I campus to apply for the grant funds if they are identified as Targeted Support?

A: Campuses must be Title I-Served to be eligible for this grant.

Q: Does the campus who received funding have to have an identification?

A: Eligible campus(es) must be Title I served and have had a 2020 identification of Comprehensive Support and Improvement, Targeted Support and Improvement, or Additional Targeted Support and Improvement.

Q: Can you revisit the eligibility criteria?

A: Please see the response directly above.

Q: If a campus has a D rating but not comprehensive or targeted support, would they be able to apply?

A: No. See response above.

Q: Is it correct to assume that campuses rated D/F and/or Comprehensive will have priority for this grant?

A: Priority points will be assigned to campuses based on their 2019 state accountability rating, percentage of the campus population identified as Economically Disadvantaged, and the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) campus definition.

Q: Can you please clarify the difference between TI served and eligible?

A: Some campuses are eligible to be Title I-Served, but the district has decided, through the SC500 - Title I, Part A campus selection form in the ESSA Consolidated Federal Grant Application, to either Not Serve (NS) or Skip (Sk) the campus.

Q: Are elementary campuses that feed into an intermediate campus considered part of the feeder pattern?

A: Yes. For the purposes of this grant, a feeder campus is a campus that is one-level directly above or below the identified and awarded campus. These feeder campuses must also be Title I-Served.

Q: Is it one level above and below the identified campus?

A: Yes. For the purposes of this grant, a feeder campus is a campus that is one-level directly above or below the identified campus.

Q: Does the one level up or down campus have to be a Title I campus?

A: Yes, the feeder campus must also be a Title I-served campus.

Q: If the current requested amendment before the USDE is approved...and comprehensive support campuses may opt-out of continued interventions...would they still be eligible for this funding?

A: The Texas Education Agency (TEA) has submitted a request to the United States Department of Education (USDE) that would allow the agency to waive identifying a new cohort of campuses for federal identifications during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, waiving this requirement does not allow the agency to exit campuses or remove federal school improvement labels for 2021–2022.

An LEA choosing to ‘opt out’ of required interventions associated with the federal identifications is not a factor for eligibility for this grant. LEAs receiving the ESF-Focused Support grant would be opting-in to fulfilling the requirements associated with this grant.

Q: How many campuses are eligible?

There are approximately 2700 campuses in the state that are eligible for this grant.

Grant Allocation and award

Q: For priority points, will a campus be higher priority if they have lower A-F ratings from 2019?

A: Yes. Priority points will be assigned in rank order from F to A. Campuses with lower State Accountability ratings would be awarded more priority points.

Q: Can grant funds be utilized for grant shepherd position?

A: It is allowable to use a portion of this grant for payroll. The district will need to ensure that they have allocated enough for costs associated with the VIP partnership and then can use the remaining amount for other budget object codes.

Q: Can the grant be used to pay a salary for a teacher?

A: It is allowable to use a portion of this grant for payroll. The district will need to ensure that they have allocated enough for the VIP costs and then can use the remaining amount for other budget object codes

Q: Does the cost of VIP come from the \$99K-150K allotted to a campus?

A: Yes, VIP costs incurred will be paid for by the grant allocation for that campus.

Q: How much money are we talking about with this grant?

A: We anticipate that campuses will be awarded between \$99,000-\$150,000 with this grant.

Q: Can you explain the funding structure a little more: \$99,000 vs \$150,000 per campus?

A: Funding will be primarily determined by the total number of awarded campuses.

Q: Would the grant award of \$99,000 to \$150,000 be distributed each school year or would the total amount need to cover both school years?

A: The awarded LEA will receive a single Notice of Grant Award (NOGA) with the total award amount to be budgeted over the length of the grant term of two years.

Q: Is the grant award (\$99,000 - \$150,000) for the two year grant period or per year of the grant?

A: See response above.

Q: Can the district move money between schools as needed?

A: The district may reserve up to 30% of the total awarded funds to be used at Title I-served campuses within one level of the direct feeder pattern of the awarded schools.

Q: Grant award amounts are dependent on the number of grants awarded, will districts use \$100k per campus in the application with the knowledge that even if awarded, that amount is subject to change?

A: The District should complete a Part 2 Budget Workbook with \$99,000 per eligible campus the district is applying on behalf of. This amount could be subject to change based on the final award amount and some campuses not being awarded this grant.

Q: How many grants will be awarded?

A: We are anticipating awarding between 200 and 400 campuses.

Q: Please explain how this grant works with the regular Title I SIG 1003 grant if a District gets both. Will improvement plans be aligned?

A: If a district 'opts-in' to the 2021-2022 Title I, 1003 School Improvement Grant and is also awarded the 2021-2023 ESF-Focused Support Grant the LEA will be responsible for the measures and requirements in both sets of Program Guidelines.

Q: Currently, 60% of SI grant funds can be assigned to payroll. Will that remain allowable under the ESF-Focused Grant?

A: Yes. The limit for funds budgeted in budget object code 6100-Payroll will be 60% of the total award amount to the LEA.

Q: Is there a cap of the amount of funds that may be allocated to 6100 or 6300?

A: The limit for funds budgeted in budget object code 6100-Payroll will be 60% of the total award amount to the LEA. There is not a budget limit for 6300.

Q: Is there going to be a percentage limit on the new grant for 6100 (like the 60% payroll limit in the current SIG)

A: See response above.

Q: What budget do LEAs write their budget plans to, if award ranges from \$99,000 to \$150,00?

A: The District should complete a Part 2 Budget Workbook with \$99,000 per eligible campus the district is applying on behalf of. This amount could be subject to change based on the possibility for the final award amount and some campuses not being awarded this grant. These issues will be addressed during the negotiation process.

Q: If grantees do not know how much they will be awarded, how will they complete the budget portion of the application?

A: See response above.

Q: Since it is a two-year award, what happens if a campus exits school improvement after the first year because they had already made progress but cancellation of accountability prevented exiting comprehensive status? Does the campus get the full amount or will the 2nd year not be awarded?

A: By applying for the ESF-Focused Support Grant the LEA is committing to meet the performance requirements for the length of the grant term. If after the 2021-2022 school year an awarded campus has exited the federal accountability identification, the campus will still have full access to the funds in the second year and will be required to meet all required guidelines of the grant.

ESF-Diagnostic

Q: What is the process of conducting an ESF Self-Assessment?

A: The self-assessment process involves gathering and analyzing available campus data, collecting and analyzing artifacts and other evidence aligned to each of the Essential Actions in the Effective Schools Framework, and synthesizing the evidence gathered to reflect on the school's current practices in relation to the Effective Schools Framework. Using this information, the campus will be able to identify which 2-3 Essential Actions are the highest leverage areas for campus improvement. Findings identified through the self-assessment process will be used to determine the focus of the VIP support pursued in the ESF-Focused Support Grant.

Q: What is the timeline for completing the ESF Diagnostic?

A: Campuses who receive the ESF-Focused Support Grant and have not had an ESF-Diagnostic within the past three years will engage in an ESF-Diagnostic during the spring of the first year of the grant award (2021-2022). The diagnostics typically occur during January -April.

Q: So will we have to have an ESF done in the 30 days?

A: Please see the answer directly above.

Q: Does the ESF diagnostic have to be completed before the application is completed? If not, when is the diagnostic supposed to be completed?

A: No, please see answer to the questions above.

Q: So if you have completed the self assessment but not the diagnostic, we still will need to complete the diagnostic?

A: Correct. If the campus has not received an ESF-Diagnostic within the past three years, they will be required to complete one during the spring of 2022.

Q: What is the timeline for completing the ESF Diagnostic?

A: ESF-Diagnostics are conducted during the spring months (January -April).

Q: Is this grant appropriate for schools not requiring an ESF diagnostic?

A: Yes. This grant is available for all Title-I served campuses with a 2020 Federal Identification of Comprehensive School Support and Improvement, Targeted Support and Improvement, and/or Additional Targeted Support and Improvement. If a campus is awarded this grant and has not previously been required to engage in an ESF-Diagnostic, they will be required to receive an ESF-Diagnostic as part of the grant requirements.

Q: Clarification: If a LEA is interested, an ESF Diagnostic will need to be conducted prior to completing the application for the purpose of supplemental attachment(s)?

A: The campus will not need to have an ESF-Diagnostic prior to completing the grant application. Instead, they will complete a self-assessment to help identify the areas of focus for their school improvement efforts, and for the purpose of the grant application. The campus will engage in the ESF-Diagnostic process and receive an ESF-Diagnostic during the spring of 2022.

Q: If we already do a TIP would the campus be required to do the ESF-aligned web-based improvement plan?

A: Yes. However, this should not result in two plans or in a duplication of effort for the campus. The web-based plan can accommodate all information found in the campus TIP and will allow for the planning associated with grant implementation planning and progress monitoring.

Q: So if the campus wasn't required to complete the ESF diagnostic and therefore hasn't done the ESF diagnostic prior to the grant submission, they are still eligible, they just have to participate in the diagnostic once awarded the grant?

A: This is a correct summary of the ESF-Diagnostic requirements.

Q: Is the ESF Diagnostic conducted during the first year of the grant? and who will conduct it?

A: Yes. The ESF Diagnostic will be conducted during the first year of the grant, typically between the months of January-April. The Diagnostic will be conducted by one of our trained and certified ESF Facilitators. Many of these facilitators work at Regional Service Centers, and we have additional external facilitators who are trained and certified as well.

Q: Just to clarify...if the campus is additional targeted or targeted...and they have not had to participate in the ESF diagnostic...then they MUST have one to participate in this grant?

A: Correct- if a campus is additional targeted/targeted and they have not had to participate in an ESF Diagnostic, engaging in a Diagnostic will be a requirement of this grant. The web-based improvement plan will closely align to the required components of a campus improvement plan. The web-based platform is a way to streamline the development of this plan for grant recipients.

Q: If we have not done an ESF self assessment, or been trained in ESF, is the one month application window enough time to do this?

A: If a campus has not completed the ESF-self-assessment before, nor been trained in the ESF, we anticipate that the self-assessment process will provide clear guidance to engage in the self-assessment prior to the grant application. If an LEA needs support or guidance in completing the self-assessment, their regional ESC can support them in the self-assessment process.

Q: If a campus rating did not require a diagnostic (additional targeted support or targeted support) do they still have to do the diagnostic for this grant?

A: Yes, all campuses who have not received an ESF-Diagnostic in the last three years, will be required to have a diagnostic as part of this grant. This is true for all campuses receiving the grant-including additional targeted support and targeted support campuses.

Grant Pathways- Vetted Improvement Programs, TIL, etc.

Q: I had read about highly qualified instructional materials as another pathway? Is that no longer a source? Just want to confirm as that was an area of question as to resources available.

A: At this time, only two pathways are included. If the district is interested in pursuing HQIM, RSSP or the CRIMSI pilot may be options to consider. Please find contact information on the TEA website or email us for additional support in connecting you with those divisions.

Q: Are the the ESC Vetted Improvement Programs the same as the External Vetted Improvement Programs?

A: No. ESC Vetted Improvement Programs are operated by the Regional Education Service Centers. The External Vetted Improvement Programs are operated by private outside companies.

Q: Will RSSP be considered as one of the external VIP

A: The approved External VIPs are listed on the ESF website, <https://texasesf.org/vetted-programs/>. These are the only approved External VIPs that will be allowable to meet the Program Requirements for this grant.

Q: Can only districts in Region 2 choose PBIS?

A: Applicants that choose to apply for Pathway 1 must partner with its 'home' Education Service Center for participation in Texas Instructional Leadership (TIL). The applicant may apply for Pathway 1 and choose to partner with ESC 2 and PBIS as the Vetted Improvement Program.

Q: On your link, only the student culture area shows supported by ESC. Is this correct, or can ESC support all identified areas?

A: When you visit <https://texasesf.org/vetted-programs/>, if you choose TIL as the filter, you will see that ESCs can support a variety of Essential Actions, not limited to 3.1 (Student Culture).

Q: If a vetted vendor is not on the district bid list, do we need to get board approval to contract with these vendors?

A: The district will need to follow its policy on contracting with vendors.

Q: If we are currently participating in TIL, do we have to participate in it again if we get awarded the grant?

A: If the District applies for pathway 1 on behalf of a campus that has already participated in a TIL cohort, the district may opt to participate in PBIS, a different cohort of TIL than previously engaged, or expand engagement in the previously engaged TIL Cohort.

Q: What is the average cost for TIL per campus?

A: TIL costs vary between regions. Please reach out to your Education Service Center TIL Leads for specific costs.

Q: When will LEA's who receive the grant be able to work with the vetted improvement program? After July notification or after September?

A: The July 8th anticipated award announcement date will be the 'pre-award' date of the grant. The LEA may begin work on the date the awards are announced.

Q: Still a little confused about the VIP selection and the implications in the budget. Will that be firm in the grant budget application or will that be part of negotiations?

A: The LEA will indicate the selected VIP on the required pathway supplemental attachment. The LEA will need to reachout to the ESC or External Vetted Improvement Program to better understand the cost points. The LEA is responsible for creating a budget that meets the needs of the LEA and assures partnership with the Vetted Improvement program for the length of the 2 year grant cycle.

Q: Can you please out that link to the vetted esf webpage in chat so it is live?

A: <https://texasesf.org/vetted-programs/>

Q: Looking at the TEA website. The link to the ESC vetted programs and the External vetted programs are the same.

<https://tea.texas.gov/student-assessment/monitoring-and-interventions/school-improvement/lea-grants>

A: Correct. Both ESC VIPs and External VIPs are listed on the ESF website.

Improvement Plans Requirements

Q: Does a non-awarded applicant complete a TIP next year? Is there an improvement plan that fills the gap?

A: All campuses will have the option to opt-in or opt-out of school improvement intervention next year. If a campus chooses to opt-out of engaging in school improvement interventions with the TEA Division of School Improvement, they will not be required to submit a TIP to the Division of School Improvement next year. However, it is best practice for all campuses to continue their school improvement efforts and retain those efforts (including a TIP) locally.

Q: Are you anticipating required submissions quarterly as with the current TIPs-inclusive of progress monitoring and ongoing conversations TEA staff?

A: Implementation progress submissions will be required. However, frequency of progress updates and conversations with TEA Staff have not yet been determined.

Q: Are you anticipating required submissions quarterly as with the current TIPs-inclusive of progress monitoring and ongoing conversations TEA staff as we do currently?

A: See answer above.

Q: If you are implementing the regular School Improvement Grant and completing the TIP requirements and awarded this one....will the 90-day plans be similar in order to not duplicate efforts?

A: Yes. There will be alignment in the requirements for the 2021-2022 Title I, 1003 School Improvement Grant and this 2021-2023 ESF-Focused Support Grant.

Q: We use Plan4learning. Is it an approved tool or would we need to revise that contract and be expected to use something else?

A: A: Plan4learning is a software platform and is not included in the VIP list. However, Plan4learning is our partner in the web-based plan we mentioned in this grant.

Q: We have our own online CIP software. Will grant recipients have to use Plan4Learning for their CIP next year? We don't want to have to support both platforms in our district.

A: Yes. TEA's platform for the web-based improvement plan for this grant will be required. Access and use of the web-based improvement plan will be at no cost to the campus.

Q: Is the ESF-aligned web-based improvement plan the same as a TIP?

A: The platform is the same but since this grant is not tied to interventions, it will not be considered a TIP. The improvement plan for this grant would be more closely aligned to what you would normally have captured in your CIP. The web-based plan is a way to streamline the process for our grant recipients.

Q: We were under the impression that grant recipients would be required to engage in TIP-style monitoring with the Division of School Improvement. Can you please clarify the monitoring requirements that campuses would be required to engage in during SY 21-22?

A: Grant recipients will be required to engage in ongoing feedback, coaching and implementation support from the Division of School Improvement throughout the length of the 2 year grant cycle.

Q: After the allocation is awarded, what is the follow-up documentation and data collection that will be required?

A: Please see the response directly above.

Q: And are the funding report submission and progress updates more like TIP Cycle 1-2-3 submissions, or more like a comprehensive funding report?

A: Funding report submission and progress updates will be more directly aligned to the web based improvement plan. The grant will require a mid grant cycle funding report submission between the 2021-2022 school year and the 2022-2023 school year.

Q: If a Targeted campus completed a Self-Assessment in the fall of 2019, wrote a TIP in 2019-2020 and 2020-2021, do the campuses complete a NEW Self-Assessment?

A: For the purpose of the application, no this example campus would not need a new self-assessment. However, this campus will engage in an ESF Diagnostic if awarded the grant.

Q: Will the improvement efforts such as the 90-day reflections be kept locally?

A: Campuses awarded the ESF-Focused Support Grant, will be required to submit their improvement plans and progress updates throughout the year (such as the 90-day reflections) to the Division of School Improvement.

Q: If you are implementing the regular School Improvement Grant and completing the TIP requirements and awarded this one....will the 90 plans be similar in order to not duplicate efforts?

A: Yes, they will be the same and it will not carry the expectation that you develop another plan.

Q: Just to clarify...the web-based improvement plan will be separate from the campus improvement plan?

A: The web-based improvement plan will be the improvement plan that is required for campuses awarded the ESF-focused Support grant. There will not be an additional, separate campus improvement plan.

Logistics

Q: Our district is located in two different Region centers. May we choose which one we want to join?

A: Please reach out to the Division of School Improvement Directly to discuss this question.

Q: When are the Letters of Intent due?

A: For the purpose of this grant, the Letter of Interest is the grant application. The grant will post on March 22, 2021 and the application window will close on April 21, 2021.

Q: When will applications be posted and all other documents?

A: The grant and all documents will post on March 22, 2021 to the Grant Opportunities Page.
<https://tea4avalonzo.tea.state.tx.us/GrantOpportunities/forms/GrantProgramSearch.aspx>

Q: Where do you find the grant application

A: See answer above.

Q: Just to clarify -- each campus writes their own grant? or can a district apply with multiple campuses involved?

A: The LEA is applying on behalf of eligible campuses. The LEA will submit one Application Part 1, one Application Part 2 Budget Workbook and one required supplemental attachment for each eligible campus the district is applying on behalf of.

Q: Is this a paper grant or in TEAL?

A: This grant is a paper grant that will be filed electronically via email. This grant is not found in the TEAL eGrants system.