Texas ACE Blueprint

TEXAS ACE
Afterschool Centers on Education

2020 - 2021

Texas ACE Grant Programs

The Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) program is authorized by Title IV, Part B of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015. The Texas 21st CCLC program operates as the Texas Afterschool Centers on Education, or Texas ACE. Texas ACE creates community learning centers that provide opportunities during non-school hours, particularly for students who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools and their families, for students to participate in supplemental academic and enrichment activities that help students meet state and local student standards in core academic subjects, such as reading and math; offers students a broad array of enrichment activities to reinforce and complement the regular academic program, and offers families of participating students opportunities for meaningful engagement in their children's education, including opportunities for literacy and related educational development.

States distribute funds to eligible entities using a competitive grant process. TEA currently funds two cycles of grants – Cycle 9 and Cycle 10. Grants to local programs range from about $250,000 up to $1.8 million per year.

TEA supports grantees in implementing high-quality programs. Those supports include: a quality assurance monitoring and feedback process, capacity development facilitation, individualized technical assistance, training opportunities, annual professional learning conference, data collection and reporting management, local program evaluation support, outreach materials, and a program-specific help desk.

> For the 2020-2021 school year, TEA will award $97 million to 83 continuing local grant programs in 17 of 20 state education service center (ESC) regions. The programs provide services in 602 learning centers serving Grades K-12 and are projected to serve an estimated 140,000 students and their families in before school, after school, and summer programs between August 1, 2020 and July 31, 2021.

Texas ACE is designed to improve student performance on state assessments, core course grades, on-time grade level advancement, school day attendance, discipline referrals, high school graduation rates, and college and career readiness. Results from statewide program evaluation of Texas ACE has shown that participants, when compared with non-participants had:

- higher test scores in reading/English language arts and mathematics while in Grades 9-12,
- fewer disciplinary incidents while in Grades 6-12,
- fewer school day absences while in Grades 4-12, and
- an increased likelihood of grade promotion overall.

This Blueprint serves to guide Texas ACE programs toward full implementation of program components that define high quality programming. The degree of implementation is assessed at various points throughout the year. TEA provides responsive resources to support programs as they move toward optimal programming. The following sections describe the components and subcomponents in which the grantees are working.

Purpose and Use of the Blueprint

The Texas ACE Blueprint (the Blueprint) guides Texas ACE grantees through implementing high-quality programming at the center level. Local grant-funded project directors, site coordinators, and family engagement specialists use the Blueprint – along with a suite of training and support resources – to learn about the components of program quality and set goals to move toward optimal operations and, ultimately, improved outcomes for students. TEA uses the data gathered through the Texas ACE Quality Assurance Process to measure implementation and improvement over time. Grantees use the resulting data and feedback in developing action plans that specifically address identified areas of improvement.

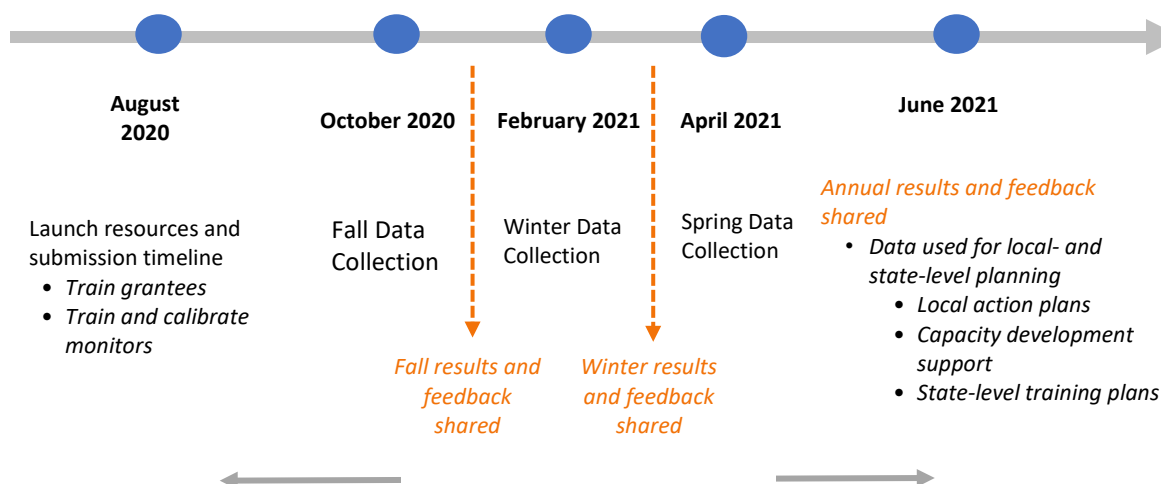Grantees are monitored using this blueprint on the following timeline:

August 2020

Launch resources and submission timeline
- *Train grantees*
- *Train and calibrate monitors*

October 2020

Fall Data Collection

Fall results and feedback shared

February 2021

Winter Data Collection

Winter results and feedback shared

April 2021

Spring Data Collection

June 2021

Annual results and feedback shared
- *Data used for local- and state-level planning*
  - *Local action plans*
  - *Capacity development support*
  - *State-level training plans*

Figure 1: Texas ACE Blueprint Timeline

Programs submit quality monitoring data to TEA at three points each program year (fall, winter, spring), depending on the Qi. TEA provides feedback on each of the three submissions. Grantees use the feedback along with TEA's capacity development process (CDP) to identify and address areas for improvement. Certain items are monitored more regularly, either because they are essential drivers of positive student outcomes (e.g., student attendance) or because they are correlated with program compliance or fiscal risk (e.g., expenditures monitoring, staffing, and student safety).

Program Components and Subcomponents. The Blueprint integrates and organizes evidence-based research, state-level priorities, experienced stakeholder feedback, and federal program requirements into four broad components: 1) School Community Engagement; 2) Vision, Mission, Goals; 3) Continuous Quality Improvement; and 4) Operations. The four components consist of 15 subcomponents aligned with program operations.

Table 1: Texas ACE Blueprint Quality Components by Subcomponent

Quality Component	Subcomponents
School Community Engagement	Campus and Program Engagement Student Recruitment and Attendance Intentional Activities Community Engagement Family Engagement Sustainability Planning
Vision, Mission, Goals	Strategic Planning Staffing Partnerships
Continuous Quality Improvement	Internal Quality Assurance Staff Development Local Independent Program Evaluation
Operations	Program Operations Data Collection in Tx21st Budgeting and Expenditures Management

Each subcomponent is measured on a continuum of quality representing "stages of practice" along which programs can move toward optimal performance. Of the three stages, the beginning stage – called *Implementing* – aligns with the baseline operational expectations for high quality programs primarily guided by the federal statute, state program requirements, and research-based best practices. By design, all programs are expected to be at least *Implementing* and, with state-level supports and resources, moving toward *Optimizing*.

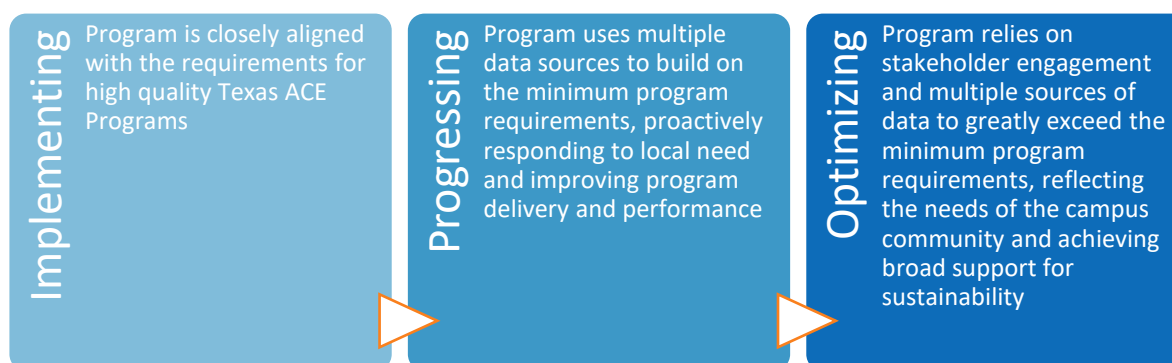| Implementing	Progressing	Optimizing
Program is closely aligned with the requirements for high quality Texas ACE Programs	Program uses multiple data sources to build on the minimum program requirements, proactively responding to local need and improving program delivery and performance	Program relies on stakeholder engagement and multiple sources of data to greatly exceed the minimum program requirements, reflecting the needs of the campus community and achieving broad support for sustainability

Figure 2: Stages of Practice

At each stage of practice, subcomponents are aligned with a set of practices that define quality at that stage. The definitions of quality represented at the "Implementing" stage are presented in Appendix 1.

Quality Indicators (Qis). Subcomponents are operationalized with indicators designed to measure progress along the continuum of quality. Below is an example of one Qi and the requirements for achieving each stage of progress. A full set of indicators at the implementing stage and the submission timeline for each can be found in Appendix 2.

Quality Indicator (Qi) 1: Stakeholder Involvement in Strategic Planning				
0 **Non-compliant**	1 Compliant	2 Implementing	3 Progressing	4 Optimizing
The center does not provide evidence of its strategic plan.	The center provides evidence of its strategic plan.	The center's strategic planning process is shared with key stakeholders.	The strategic planning process is completed with engagement from key stakeholders.	Robust program data and stakeholder feedback drives the strategic planning process annually.

Figure 3: Example of Quality Indicator (Qi) alignment with Stages of Practice
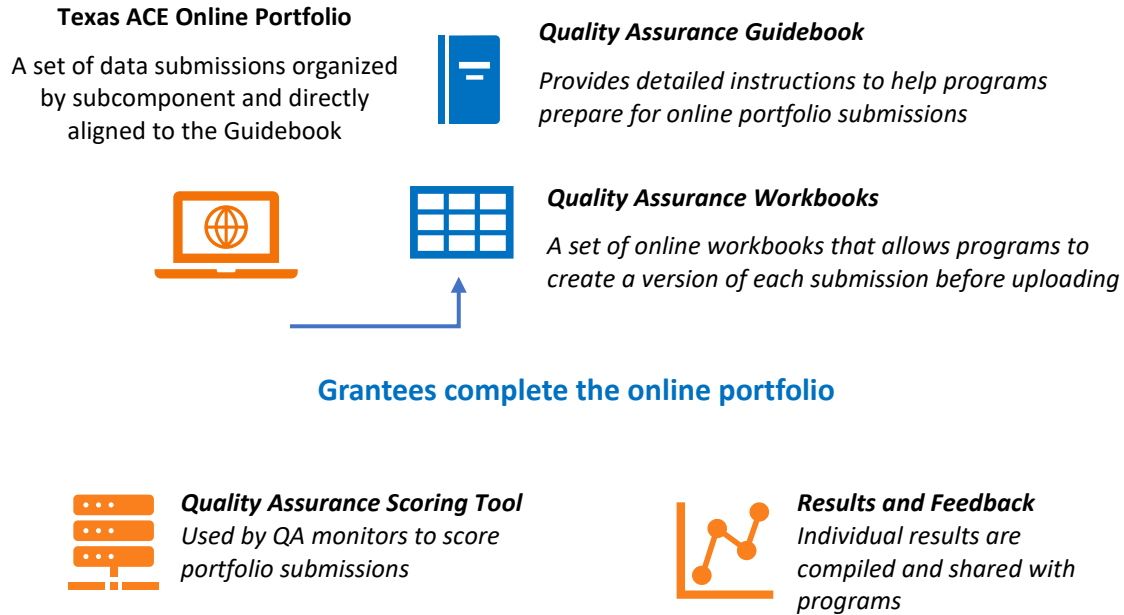
The Quality Assurance Process

The Quality Assurance Process (QAP), which is grounded in the components and operationalized through Quality Indicators (Qis), is an annual process in which trained monitors review and score program submissions. Data is collected at three points during the year, depending on the Qi. Programs are provided with feedback after each submission is reviewed.

Texas ACE Online Portfolio – Programs enter data and evidence for quality assurance using this online tool. Using the online platform, programs respond to a series of logic-based questions to demonstrate progress toward Blueprint expectations for each Qi being measured. Programs electronically submit evidence in a variety of formats (e.g., PDF, Word, JPEG, PNG, Excel, weblinks). No identifying student data is collected in the online portfolio.

To support programs in submitting their best evidence, TEA created two tools: 1) the *Quality Assurance Guidebook* provides detailed aligned instructions for submitting evidence for each Qi; and 2) the *Quality Assurance Workbooks* allows programs to enter mock-up data submissions to review or share internally before actually loading the submission into the Portfolio. Quality assurance monitors use the data and evidence collected to assign a score to each Qi. The results reflect the level of implementation for each submission. Using an online data management tool, monitors record scores to generate center- and grantee-level data sets used for reporting QAP results.

Texas ACE Online Portfolio

A set of data submissions organized by subcomponent and directly aligned to the Guidebook

Quality Assurance Guidebook

Provides detailed instructions to help programs prepare for online portfolio submissions

Quality Assurance Workbooks

A set of online workbooks that allows programs to create a version of each submission before uploading

Grantees complete the online portfolio

Quality Assurance Scoring Tool
Used by QA monitors to score portfolio submissions

Results and Feedback
Individual results are compiled and shared with programs

Quality assurance monitors score the submissions, create reports and provide feedback

Figure 4: Quality Assurance Data Submission, Scoring and Feedback

Individual results are compiled and shared with programs in a report format sent electronically after each monitoring assessment – fall, winter, and spring. The reports compare self-assessment scores and provide formative feedback to highlight opportunities for improvement. A sample of each is shown below.

Formative Feedback Toward Improved Program Quality

Blueprint Subcomponent: Staff Development

Qi34: Staff Effectiveness

Monitor Score: 2

Implementing: The Center has a method for assessing staff effectiveness and identifies opportunities for growth for staff members; however, there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate if and how feedback is shared with staff. To improve performance on this Qi, the Center needs to examine the performance of each staff member and meet with him/her to determine opportunities for growth. Staff members should be part of conversations about their needs and the opportunities that are available to them for growth.

Blueprint Subcomponent	Quality Indicator	Self-Assessment Score	Monitor Score
STAFF DEVELOPMENT	Qi34: Staff Quality: Staff Effectiveness	4	2
	Qi35: Staff Quality: Ongoing Staff Learning	3	2
	Qi36: Onboarding and Leadership	3	4

Capacity Development Process

The Texas ACE Capacity Development Process, a facilitated assessment and planning process that results in quality improvement action plans, consists of three key steps: (1) facilitated grantee self-assessment with facilitated grantee staff site visits; (2) grantees collaborating internally with support to develop improvement plans; and (3) capacity development coaches following up with each grantee to support the implementation of their improvement plans and documenting progress toward meeting goals. The process involves grant leadership, front line staff, and program stakeholders in an assessment of the compiled results along with other local data sources to increase performance on individual Qis and overall capacity of the organization to drive quality.
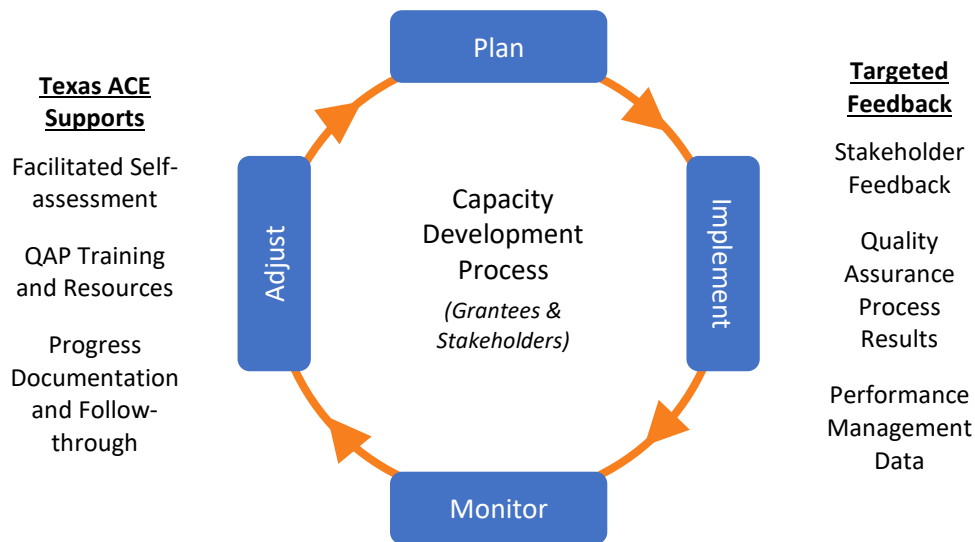
Texas ACE Supports

Facilitated Self-assessment

QAP Training and Resources

Progress Documentation and Follow-through

Plan

Adjust

Capacity Development Process
(Grantees & Stakeholders)

Implement

Monitor

Targeted Feedback

Stakeholder Feedback

Quality Assurance Process Results

Performance Management Data

Figure 3: Texas ACE Capacity Development Process

Appendix 1: Submission Timeline by Quality Indicator

Component: School Community Engagement

Blueprint Subcomponent	Quality Indicators (Qi)	Minimum Qi Submission*	Submission Timing	Staff Position Responsible
CAMPUS AND PROGRAM ENGAGEMENT	1. Alignment of Student Achievement Goals	Logic model with all required components	Spring	Site Coordinator
	2. Ongoing Collaboration Between Texas ACE and School Day Staff	Evidence of the center's access to information about campus-level daily operations and activities	Winter	
STUDENT RECRUITMENT & ATTENDANCE	3. Initial Prioritization of Students Most in Need	Criteria for serving students most in need	Fall, Spring	Site Coordinator
	4. Data-driven Ongoing Recruiting	Evidence of data used to identify trends in attendance	Winter	
	5. Evidence of Impact: Serving Targeted Number of Students/Dosage	Attendance report	Spring	
	6. Evidence of Impact: Duration of Attendance/Dosage	Attendance report that includes daily attendance by activity	Spring	
	7. Evidence of Impact: Behavioral Gains (school day and Texas ACE)	Logic model with all required components	Spring	
INTENTIONAL ACTIVITIES	8. Academic Lesson Plan Alignment	One academic lesson with required components	Fall	Site Coordinator
	9. Enrichment Lesson Plan Alignment	One enrichment lesson plan with required components	Fall	
	10. Social and Emotional Learning	One lesson plan with required components	Winter	
	11. Oversight of Lesson Planning	Evidence of feedback on a particular lesson	Winter	
	12. Oversight of Instructional Delivery	Completed observation tool	Winter	
	13a. Oversight of Academic Support Services	Academic support services plan	Winter	
	13b. Design of Academic Support Services	Academic support services plan	Winter	
	14. Instructional Program Design	Logic model with all required components	Fall	
	15. Evidence of Impact: Academic Gains	Logic model with all required components; academic outcome data	Spring	
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	16. Texas ACE Advisory Group	Advisory group member report	Winter	Project Director
	17. Advisory Group Engagement	Evidence that advisory group members engage in programming	Winter	

Blueprint Subcomponent	Quality Indicators (Qi)	Minimum Qi Submission*	Submission Timing	Staff Position Responsible
FAMILY ENGAGEMENT	18. Coordination of Services	Logic model with all required components; data used to identify family needs	Winter	Family Engagement Specialist
	19. Family Resource Center	Evidence of a family resource center	Winter	
	20. Family Participation Outcomes	Logic model with all required components	Spring	
	21. High-quality Family Engagement Activities	Evidence of data used to establish family need	Winter	
	22. Activity Attendance	Attendance data for each family engagement activity	Spring	
SUSTAINABILITY PLANNING	23. Sustainability Plan	Sustainability plan	Winter	Project Director

Component: Vision, Mission, & Goals

Blueprint Subcomponent	Quality Indicators (Qi)	Minimum Qi Submission*	Submission Timing	Staff Position Responsible
STRATEGIC PLANNING	24 Stakeholder Involvement in Strategic Planning	Strategic plan	Fall	Site Coordinator
	25. Needs Assessment Process	Current needs assessment	Fall	
	26. Alignment of Strategic Plan	Logic model with all required components	Fall	
STAFFING	27a. Staffing Plan	Staffing plan with all required components	Winter	Site Coordinator
	27b. Appropriate Staffing	Staffing plan with all required components	Winter	
	28. High-quality Staff and Student Relationships	Evidence of efforts to ensure emotional safety of students	Winter	
	29. Evidence of Impact: Ratio of Staff: Students	Number of students and staff present at sign-in over a two-week period	Spring	
PARTNERSHIPS	30. Engaging Partners in Sustainability Planning	Sustainability plan	Winter	Project Director
	31. Partner Involvement	Signed formal partnership agreement	Winter	

Component: Continuous Quality Improvement

Blueprint Subcomponent	Quality Indicators (Qi)	Minimum Qi Submission*	Submission Timing	Staff Position Responsible
INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE	32. Internal Quality Assurance Process	Internal quality assurance process	Winter	Site Coordinator
	33. Collaborative Continuous Improvement	Evidence that center staff internally share resources and ideas about implementation of high-quality program elements	Winter	
STAFF DEVELOPMENT	34. Staff Quality: Staff Effectiveness	Staff effectiveness evaluation plan	Winter	Site Coordinator
	35. Staff Quality: Ongoing Staff Learning	Description of professional learning opportunities	Winter	
	36. Onboarding and Leadership	Method of building staff capacity	Fall	
LOCAL INDEPENDENT PROGRAM EVALUATION	37. Structure of Local Evaluation	Evidence of collaborative goal setting with independent evaluator	Fall	Project Director
	38a. Facilitation of Program Evaluation	Timeline of local program evaluation	Winter	Project Director
	38b. Collaborative Review of Local Program Evaluation Findings	Timeline of local program evaluation	Fall	Project Director
	39. Use of Local Evaluation Findings	Center-level local evaluation	Fall	Site Coordinator

Component: Operations

Blueprint Subcomponent	Quality Indicators (Qi)	Minimum Qi Submission*	Submission Timing	Staff Position Responsible
PROGRAM OPERATIONS	40. Dedicated Space for Texas ACE	Evidence of a collaborative planning session with campus administration	Fall	Project Director
	41. Policies and Procedures	Compliance and operations policies and procedures	Winter	
	42. Ensuring the Physical Safety of Students	Completed safety checklist(s)/assessment(s)	Fall	
DATA COLLECTION IN TX21ST	43. Data Submissions	Process to monitor data submissions	Winter	Project Director
	44. Tx21st Training	Attendance for Tx21st training by participant role	Spring	Site Coordinator
	45. Tx21st Access	Method to monitor access to Tx21st	Spring	Site Coordinator
BUDGETING & EXPENDITURES MANAGEMENT	46. Budget Process	Evidence of a budget process	Winter	Project Director
	47. Expenditures Management	Expenditure report	Spring	

*The information provided here meets the minimum upload request (i.e., Implementing). Other documentation, evidence, and artifacts will be requested to demonstrate level of implementation for program quality.

Appendix 2: High Quality Criteria by Subcomponent

Component: School Community Engagement

Subcomponent	Quality Criteria ("Implementing")
Campus and Program Engagement	✓ School day staff and ACE staff regularly coordinate to align the program with school day instruction ✓ ACE staff routinely participate in campus-level meetings and professional learning opportunities
Student Recruitment & Attendance	✓ The center identifies and recruits students most in need of services ✓ The center analyzes data to identify trends in daily attendance ✓ 100% of the targeted number of students attend the program for 45 days or more ✓ Most students (≥65%) attend the entire day of programming ✓ The center makes progress toward behavioral outcome objectives stated in the logic model
Intentional Activities	✓ The center routinely provides oversight and constructive feedback on lesson planning, instructional delivery, and academic support services ✓ Lesson plans addressed diverse student needs and the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) ✓ Program and center activities target identified center goals ✓ Academic support services are designed to facilitate student learning ✓ Program activities represent all four component areas (i.e., academics, enrichment, academic support services, and college and career readiness) and target identified program goals ✓ The center makes progress toward academic outcome objectives identified in the logic model
Community Engagement	✓ The grantee involves a voluntary advisory group to inform program development and improvement ✓ The advisory group uses data to inform recommendations
Family Engagement	✓ The family engagement specialist coordinates services with the district and the school community ✓ The family engagement specialist provides evidence of a resource center with relevant and usable information with multiple community and school resources ✓ The center utilizes targeted communication strategies to meet participation goals ✓ Family engagement activities target identified family needs and preferences and support the academic needs of students ✓ The center serves the targeted number of adults each year
Sustainability Planning	✓ The grantee collaborates with key stakeholders to develop a plan for continuing a high-quality program after grant funding ends

Component: Vision, Mission, & Goals

Subcomponent	Quality Criteria ("Implementing")
Strategic Planning	✓ The strategic plan is shared with key stakeholders ✓ Texas ACE-specific needs assessment is conducted annually and identifies the specific needs of Texas ACE students and families ✓ Logic model includes outcomes aligned to center goals and objectives and student and family needs
Staffing	✓ The staffing plan specifies proactive strategies for staff recruitment and retention ✓ All required positions and frontline positions are filled ✓ Staff develop positive relationships with students ✓ Staffing results in a staff to student ratio of no greater than 22 to 1
Partnerships	✓ The grantee collaborates with partners to identify sustainability goals ✓ Shared goals are clearly communicated within signed formal agreements

## Component: Continuous Quality Improvement

Subcomponent	Quality Criteria ("Implementing")
Internal Quality Assurance	✓ The center implements routine processes to spotlight successes and identify opportunities for improvement ✓ The center consults with other centers to share resources and ideas about implementation of high-quality program elements
Staff Development	✓ The center has a method to assess staff effectiveness ✓ Staff at all levels participate in differentiated professional learning opportunities ✓ The center uses an onboarding toolbox to share policies and procedures, instructional expectations, training expectations, and quality assurance processes
Local Independent Program Evaluation	✓ The grantee has a formal agreement with an independent evaluator to assess the implementation and outcomes of each center over time ✓ The project director actively participates in planning and implementation of program evaluation ✓ Site coordinators and stakeholders make relevant information and data accessible to the evaluator ✓ The center has prioritized needs in response to key findings of the local evaluation

Component: Operations

Component: Operations	
Subcomponent	**Quality Criteria ("Implementing")**
Program Operations	✓ The center provides dedicated, age-appropriate space for planned activities ✓ Policies and procedures address disciplinary practices, general behavior management, and safety standards ✓ The project director takes required action to ensure 100% adherence to the safety assessment
Data Collection In Tx21st	✓ The grantee reviews and approves data submission on time each term ✓ New staff are required to participate in training on Tx21st ✓ Staff have the appropriate level of access to the system
Budgeting & Expenditures Management	✓ The budget is aligned with documented student and family needs ✓ The grantee has a process to monitor expenditures for whether they are allowable, reasonable, and necessary
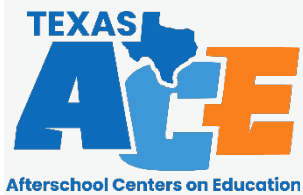
For More Information:

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