

# Learning Acceleration Support Opportunities (LASO) 2023-2024

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Strong Foundations Planning

Program Guidelines

Updated March 22, 2024



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## Grant Program Guidelines

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<b>Grant Name as it will appear on the TEA Grant Opportunities Page</b>	Strong Foundations Planning
<b>Application Due Date</b>	5:00 p.m. Central Time, December 7, 2023
<b>Program Authority</b>	<b>Updated:</b> Article III, Rider 76, 88th Texas Legislature; Article III, Rider 77, 88 <sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature; and General Appropriations Act (GAA), Article IX Section 18.78, 88th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, 2023.

## Introduction

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The Texas Education Agency (TEA), as the pass-through entity<sup>1</sup>, is the grantee<sup>2</sup> from the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) and TEA awards subgrants to non-federal entities<sup>3</sup> such as local educational agencies (LEAs), including school districts, open-enrollment 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<sup>4</sup>. 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 document MUST be used in conjunction with the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#) and the specific program instructions. The Standard Application consists of all forms to be completed in order for the applicant to be eligible for funding.

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

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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 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.**

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<sup>1</sup> 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)  
<sup>2</sup> 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)  
<sup>3</sup> 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)  
<sup>4</sup> 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 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 grant application and supporting documents on the [TEA Grant Opportunities](#) webpage.
2. Eligible applicants submit grant application via Qualtrics to TEA by the specified deadline on the [TEA Grant Opportunities](#) webpage.
3. Grant applications are reviewed and scored. Note: Applicants may be required to attend an oral interview or respond to additional questions regarding their application.
4. TEA announces applicants selected for funding on the TEA [Grants Awarded Data](#) webpage.
5. ***Awarded applicants will be required to submit an eGrants application for funding.***
6. TEA staff conducts budget negotiations on the eGrants application.
7. The Notice of Grant Award (NOGA) will be issued upon successful completion of the negotiation process.

## 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	\$20,800,000
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	\$20,800,000

## Applicant Assistance

The following types of assistance are available to applicants for this grant program.

### Contact for Clarifying Information

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

The following TEA staff member should be contacted with questions:

Program manager name	Hannah Cox
Program manager title	Director, HQIM Adoption Strategy
Program manager email	<a href="mailto:StrongFoundations@tea.texas.gov">StrongFoundations@tea.texas.gov</a>
Program manager phone	(512) 463-6673

## Errata Notices

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

DATE	EVENT
October 18, 2023; 1:00-2:00 p.m.	General Webinar schedule
October 19, 2023; 9:00-10:00 a.m.	Webinar registration link can be found on the <a href="#">LASO website</a>
October 23, 2023	Grant application available
October 30, 2023; 10:00-11:00 a.m.	Program Specific Webinar schedule
October 31, 2023; 3:00-4:00 p.m.	Webinar registration link can be found on the <a href="#">LASO website</a>
November 10, 2023	FAQ deadline
November 17, 2023	FAQ Publishing The FAQs for this grant program will be posted to the <a href="#">TEA Grant Opportunities</a> and <a href="#">LASO website</a> site no later than the date listed on the Grant Timeline. Applicants may email their questions to the LASO central inbox at <a href="mailto:LASO@tea.texas.gov">LASO@tea.texas.gov</a>
December 7, 2023	Due date for the application. The application must be received by the TEA by 5:00 p.m. Central Time. LASO individual application links will be emailed to Superintendents on October 23, 2023. Please see the <a href="#">LASO website</a> for more information. <i>See <a href="#">General and Fiscal Guidelines</a>, <b>Application Due Date and Time</b></i>
January 2, 2024-January 25, 2024	Application review period, including interviews if necessary. <i>See <a href="#">General and Fiscal Guidelines</a>, <b>Review Process</b></i>
February 8, 2024	Anticipated award announcement
March 1, 2024	Beginning date of grant (if selected for funding) <i>See <a href="#">General and Fiscal Guidelines</a>, <b>Grant Period</b></i>
June 2, 2025	Final date to submit an amendment (if selected for funding)
August 31, 2025	Ending date of grant (if selected for funding) <i>See <a href="#">General and Fiscal Guidelines</a>, <b>Grant Period</b></i>

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

## Grant at a Glance

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This section provides fundamental information pertinent to the grant program.

### Authorizing Legislation

**Updated:** This grant is authorized by the Article III, Rider 76, 88th Texas Legislature; Article III, Rider 77, 88<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature; and General Appropriations Act (GAA), Article IX Section 18.78, 88th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, 2023.

### Where to Submit the Grant Application

LASO individual application links will be emailed to Superintendents on October 23, 2023. Please see the [LASO website](#) for more information.

### Purpose of Program

Strong Foundations Planning grant provides support to LEAs to develop a strong instructional framework in math or literacy, provides optional adoption supports in selecting new HQIM if LEAs choose to make a materials switch; and trainings to support creating systems to effectively manage instruction at the district level.

### Eligible Applicants

See the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#), *Eligibility To Apply*

LEAs are eligible to apply. LEAs that have previously engaged in the Strong Foundations Framework Development Grant may not re-apply for the same subject area focus as previous grant cycles. Prior grantees for the Strong Foundations Framework Development Grant are eligible applicants in new subject areas.

Education Service Centers (ESCs) are not eligible to apply

### Shared Services Arrangement

See the General and Fiscal Guidelines, Shared Services Arrangements.

Shared services arrangements (SSAs) are not allowed for this grant program.

## Application Attachments

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This section describes the required attachments that must be included with the application.

### Required Attachments

See the following section of the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#): *Required Program-Related Attachments*

There are no program related attachments for this program.

## Application Requirements and Assurances

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This section describes the types of requirements that applicants must assure adherence to in order to be eligible to be considered for funding:

- Statutory requirements (requirements defined in the authorizing statute)
- TEA program requirements (requirements defined by TEA program staff)

### Statutory Requirements

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

Per TEC §22.0834, 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*. Does not apply to this grant program.

### TEA Program Requirements

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

In addition to the statutory requirements, TEA has established the following program requirements. Applicants must address within the application how they will achieve the following:

- LEA agrees to meet the [General and Fiscal Guidelines](#) .
- LEA agrees to meet the grant specific requirements to apply.

### Program-Specific Assurances

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

The program-specific assurances are listed on the application.

1. The LEA agrees to appointing a primary point of contract and LEA lead for all grant related activities. The LEA lead will be responsible for ensuring all assurances are met by the LEA, coordinates with the



- selected approved provider on a regular basis, attends any check-ins or webinars hosted by TEA, and communicates with TEA should the primary point of contact leave the LEA during the grant period.
2. The LEA agrees to using the TEA approved provider for the appropriate services aligned to the grant goals.
  3. The LEA agrees the Superintendent or CAO (or equivalent role) agrees to participate in any trainings or collective learning series hosted by the LEA and approved provider.
  4. The LEA agrees the Superintendent or CAO (or equivalent role) will approve the math and/or literacy development, framework adoption, and implementation process.
  5. The LEA agrees the Superintendent or CAO (or equivalent role) signs-off on the final LEA math and/or literacy instructional framework, or other products that are created as a result of completing a collective learning series on math, literacy, implementation, or assessment.
  6. The LEA agrees the LEA lead and Superintendent, or CAO (or equivalent role) will participate in monthly Communities of Practice (CoPs) with similar LEAs during the grant period. The LEA agrees to create a comprehensive committee that is representative of the LEA for the collective learning series
  7. The LEA agrees to submission of feedback surveys from TEA to LEA leadership and the LEA's committee on a quarterly basis.
  8. The LEA agrees to participating in an end-of-grant focus group upon request. TEA may reach out to request participation of committee members and/or LEA leadership.
  9. The LEA agrees to submitting all other required data as part of the grant program.

## Program Elements

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This section provides detailed information about the grant.

### Description of Program

All students deserve equitable access to research-based, TEKS-aligned, and high-quality instruction. The first step to improve instruction in core content areas is creating a district-wide, subject specific vision and framework that provides an overview of what instruction should look like in a given content area. This district-wide vision and framework should also be rooted in the research of how students learn in that subject area, be aligned to the TEKS, and be specific to the local context.

The Strong Foundations Planning grant is intended to support school systems in setting and creating a subject-specific instructional framework, aligning the vision and framework with the district's larger strategic plan, and ensuring the right systems and structures are in place to ultimately adopt and implement high-quality instructional materials and research-based instructional strategies. School systems will leave the Strong Foundations Planning grant with a subject-specific (math or literacy) vision and framework and prepares districts to either create a plan for instructional materials adoption to select high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) or supports districts in planning for implementation of HQIM they may already have.

Strong Foundations Planning Supports grant provides support to LEAs to develop a strong instructional framework in math or literacy, provides optional adoption supports in selecting new HQIM if LEAs choose to

make a materials switch; and trainings to support creating systems to effectively manage instruction at the district level.

Supports activities may include, but are not limited to:

- Development of a district-wide instructional vision and framework for the content area(s) selected.
- Training and system planning for the evaluation and potential adoption of HQIM.
- Job-embedded, high-quality professional learning on the science of how students learn in math or literacy, best practices for HQIM implementation, assessment systems and strategies, and strategic planning for learning acceleration.
- Ongoing, job-embedded capacity building support for instructional and district leaders
- Readiness assessments to support overall planning and decision-making .

Participation in Communities of Practice for district leaders (Superintendent or Chief Academic Officers) School systems may choose the following offerings within this grant:

A: Literacy Framework Development and Strategic Planning Supports

B: Mathematics Framework Development and Strategic Planning Supports

## Supplement, Not Supplant

For supplement, not supplant guidance, see the Supplement, Not Supplant Handbook on the Grants Administration Division’s [Administering a Grant](#) page.

The supplement not supplant provision

- Applies
- Does not apply

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*The following sections designated by an asterisk (\*) are not required and may be skipped by entering a NA if not applicable.*

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## \*Qualifications and Experience

The applicant agrees to provide data on the qualifications and experience of the existing or future staff members, as required per the program guidelines as follows:

Does not apply to this grant program.

## \*Performance and Evaluation Measures

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The applicant agrees to collect data and report on the following mandatory performance and evaluation measures:

- Quarterly feedback surveys completed by the LEA's leadership team.
- Collective learning series exit ticket data and required artifacts from the LEA's committee.
- Artifact submission related to creation and development of an instructional framework or other products created as a result of the grant activities

## Limits on Contracted Evaluators

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

## Application Funding

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

It is anticipated that approximately 70 - 110 LEAs will be awarded ranging in amounts from \$140,000 to \$400,000 depending on the district enrollment size.

## Selection of Applicants for Funding

Applicants will be selected in:

- Rank order
- Click or tap here to enter text.

## Cost Share or Matching Requirement

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

TEA requires a:

- X% cost share/match
- There is no cost share or matching requirement

## 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.

To calculate the maximum indirect costs that can be claimed for a grant, complete the [Maximum Indirect Costs Worksheet](#), posted on the Administering a Grant page, under the Handbooks and Other Guidance section.

## Pre-Award Costs

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

Pre-award costs:

- are permitted
- are not permitted

## Activities and Use of Funds

See the [Administering a Grant](#) page for general guidance on allowable activities and use of funds.

Allowable activities and use of funds may include but are not limited to the following:

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

Travel costs for officials such as the executive director, superintendent, or board members

- may be funded under the grant program
- may not be funded under the grant program.

Only the following travel costs are allowable for these positions

Travel associated with the grant activities. **Travel expenses are capped at 5% of LEAs' 30% discretionary spending allotment (1.5% of their total award).**

### General Allowable Activities and Use of Funds

- 50% of funds must go towards contracted services with a single Strong Foundations Approved Provider, LEA must follow local procurement policy regardless of the vendor that is chosen, 20% of grant funds for additional support from the approved provider and/or salaries or partial salaries for instructional coaches or other positions directly supporting the grant activities, and 30% of grant funds for other allowable expenses which could include:
  - Salary to support a project manager at the LEA
  - Stipends to accommodate committee member time spent on collective learning and providing feedback on an instructional framework
  - Materials and supplies needed to support the collective learning series
  - In-state travel associated with grant activities

## General Unallowable Activities and Use of Funds

In general, refer to the Budgeting Cost Guidance Handbook on the [Administering a Grant](#) page for unallowable costs.

- Advisory councils
- Cost of membership in any civic or community organization
- Hosting or sponsoring conferences
- Out-of-State travel costs
- Stipends or salaries for staff members not associated with completion of grant activities.
- Purchase of Tier 1 instructional materials outside of a small-scale pilot or for review during a review and selection phase of an adoption process

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

- Debt service (lease-purchase)
- Audit services for state-funded grants
- [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

## Scoring And Review

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

### Grant Review and Funding Criteria

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

All eligible LEA grant applications will be evaluated on the following categories:

- LEAs with prior participation and good standing in the Resilient Schools Support Program (RSSP) and/or LEAs classified as rural LEAs will be prioritized first for grant funds. A rural LEA has either: (a) an enrollment of between 300 and the median district enrollment for the state and an enrollment growth rate over the past five years of less than 20 percent; or (b) an enrollment of less than 300 students.
- LEAs in the top quartile of economically disadvantaged students in the state
- STAAR scores ranked from lowest to highest, as applicable to the content area(s) in the application.
- For Literacy Framework applications, eligible LEAs will be awarded based on rank order of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade RLA STAAR scores from lowest to highest. For Mathematics Framework applications, eligible LEAs will be awarded based on rank order of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade Math STAAR scores from lowest to highest.
- After the applicants with prior participation and good standing in RSSP and/or classified as rural LEAs have been funded, grant funds will be awarded to other applicants in the top quartile of economically disadvantaged students in the state using the same process as above. After the applicants in the top quartile of economically disadvantaged students in the state have been funded, grant funds will be awarded to other applicants using the same process as above.

In case of a tie at the end of funding availability, virtual oral interviews will be conducted to assess overall readiness.

Good standing in RSSP is defined as the following:

- LEA has completed the following:
  - LEA designates a Learning Acceleration Task Force (RSSP Committee)
  - LEA attends required RSSP Events including Launch, RSSP/TAP Calls, Bi-Monthly Check-ins with TEA, and Cohort wide Step-backs.
- LEA completes (or is on track to completing) the designated milestones with TAP support including:
  - COVID Recovery and Acceleration Plan and Stakeholder Presentation
  - Priority Area and Goals set
  - Improvement Plan development
  - Cycle 1 Mid-Cycle Step-back and Improvement Review 1
  - Cycle 2 Mid-Cycle Step-back and Improvement Review 2
- LEA completes designated RSSP LEA Surveys (Part 1, Part 1.5, Part 2 Cycle 1, Part 2 Cycle 2)

## Oral Interviews for Funding

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

During the virtual oral interviews, applicants will have the opportunity to elaborate on the purpose for their application submission and on two main topics, 1. the vision for how this grant will support the long term growth of student's instructional achievement, and 2. The districts readiness for the grant program. The total points available for these two topics is 6, 3 for exemplary in each. The applicant may reference any documents, including the Program Guidelines and FAQs.