



2024-2025 Stronger Connections Grant

Competitive Grant Application: Due 11:59 p.m. CT, July 18, 2023

NOGA ID

Application stamp-in date and time

TEA will only accept grant application documents by **email**, including competitive grant applications and amendments. Submit grant applications and amendments as follows:

Competitive grant applications and amendments to competitivegrants@tea.texas.gov.

The application **MUST** bear the signature of a person authorized to bind the applicant to a contractual agreement

Authorizing legislation:

Grant period: **Pre-award costs:**

Required attachments:

Amendment Number

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

1. Applicant Information

Name of organization

Campus name CDN Vendor ID ESC UEI

Address City ZIP Phone

Primary Contact Email Phone

Secondary Contact Email Phone

2. 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 Title Email

Phone Signature Date

Grant Writer Name Signature Date

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

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Adjustments on this page have been confirmed with _____ by _____ of TEA by phone / fax / email on _____.

3. Shared Services Arrangements

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

4. 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
The number of disciplinary actions has increased by 40%.	Research, develop, and implement a district wide process to improve school climate that results in improved peer relationships, reduction in school discipline incidents and improved student attendance. Implement the CASEL Framework to cultivate the social emotional skills needed for all students to succeed.
The number of behavioral threat assessments have increased by 20%.	We will strengthen our process for behavioral threat assessments to identify root causes that impact student behavior or triggers. We will provide support based on best practices from internal/external resources. We will change our focus from punitive to school-family-community partnerships that build positive responses.
The district student attendance is 92.43% which is below our district goal of 98% attendance. Specifically the grades with the lowest attendance districtwide are Pre-K, K, 1st, 2nd, 10th and 12th grade.	We will support students by providing opportunities to understand the implications of responsible decision-making and how absences impact academic achievement. Parents and families will be engaged in strategies to create awareness about the relationship between attendance and learning.

5. 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 the 2023-2024 school year, the number of student discipline referrals, including behavior threat assessments (BTA), will be reduced by 90% as evidenced in the PEIMS Disciplinary Summary report.

6. 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

By the end of November 2023, the number of student referrals and BTA will be reduced by 20% as evidenced by the Student Information System (Ascender) discipline reports.

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6. Measurable Progress (Cont.)

Second-Quarter Benchmark

By the end of February 2024, the number of student referrals and BTA will be reduced by 60% as evidenced by the Student Information System (Ascender) discipline reports.

Third-Quarter Benchmark

By the end of May 2024, the number of student referrals and BTA will be reduced by 90% as evidenced by the Student Information System (Ascender) discipline reports.

7. 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.

Based on the TEA grant webinar, the Texas Center for Student Supports will include a data collection tool to monitor school climate and support trends in addition to Behavior Threat Assessment reviews. This data coupled with academic data and other quantitative and qualitative data will inform the necessary action steps to adjust or modify student support structures. After input from the advisory groups and guidance from the TCSS, we will gather the necessary data needed to establish clear data protocols to engage in the analysis and frequency of data reviews. These reviews will inform decisions to either adjust the goals or modify action steps for the overall sustainability of the program.

Addressing the sustainability of the program may involve decisions that address:

1. Additional training to improve school climate and support structures and/or assess previous training for effectiveness and quality of implementation
2. Fidelity of implementation of the Behavior Threat Assessment and actions that address the behavior challenge
3. Funding allocations review
4. Staffing review
5. Parent and community engagement
6. Availability of mental health resources
7. Academic support, addressing root cause for low academic achievement
8. Review campus responses to bullying, violence and acts that may harm the students and others.

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8. 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.

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. The applicant provides assurance to adhere to all Statutory Requirements, TEA Program Requirements, and Performance Measures, as noted in the 2024–2025 Stronger Connections Grant Program Guidelines, and shall provide the Texas Education Agency, upon request, any performance data necessary to assess the success of the grant program.
4. The applicant will formally establish a Student Support Program at three district campuses (one elementary, one intermediate/middle school, one high school) to address school climate and establish a student support team structure aligned to the training and support provided by the Texas Center for Student Supports and the regional ESC. If the applicant has few than three campuses or does not have three of the listed types of campuses, the applicant will establish the Student Support Program and the student support team structure at all campuses, up to three, served in the district.
5. The applicant will allocate 6% of awarded funds for contracted services for technical assistance provided by the regional ESC. Complete the transaction with the regional ESC in a timely manner. Time is of the essence in completing the transaction to ensure that the program is implemented efficiently and effectively to successfully achieve the goals of the program.
6. The applicant will allocate 10% of awarded funds for professional and contracted services with a partner approved by the Texas Center for Student Support and TEA. Complete the transaction with the regional ESC in a timely manner. Time is of the essence in completing the transaction to ensure that the program is implemented efficiently and effectively to successfully achieve the goals of the program.
7. The applicant will use the family engagement playbook developed by the Texas Center for Student Supports to partner and build support with parents and families prior to a student support team assessment, and during the student support implementation process to facilitate a student support partnership with families.
8. The applicant will establish a parent, student, and staff advisory committee to provide input on the establishment of the Student Support Program.
9. The applicant will engage in Student Support Program planning activities from the beginning of the grant program through implementation at the beginning of the 2024-2025 school year.
10. The applicant will establish and implement at the beginning of the 2024-2025 school year, the Student Support Program aligned to the content and training provided by the Texas Center for Student Supports.
11. The applicant will incorporate a case management system into the student support team structure aligned to the training and support provided by the Texas Center for Student Supports.
12. The applicant will align the student support team structure with behavioral threat assessment team operation and outcomes to ensure that students are well supported and that the effectiveness of interventions are monitored.
13. The applicant will implement the data collection and reporting system developed by the Texas Center for Student Supports to gather and analyze data to monitor efficacy of the implementation of the Student Support Program, including student support team structure, quality of support leading to positive outcomes, and data related to increases in desired outcomes (e.g. increase in student support team referrals for nonacademic needs, increase in effective supports received by students, reduction in disciplinary incidents, reduction in bullying and harassment, increase in referrals for mental health services, reduction in removals from class, etc.).
14. The applicant will provide timely response to requests from TEA for information and data regarding program development, implementation, and performance and evaluation measures.

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9. Statutory/ TEA Program Requirements

1. Describe how the LEA will identify the campuses that will participate in the establishment of the Student Support Program described in the program description? Include the criteria or considerations that will influence the determination by the LEA.

Before applying for the grant, the district leadership team consulted with campus leaders to assess their interest in the process. This meeting captured a high level of interest and commitment to ensure fidelity of implementation that will better serve the social emotional needs of our student population. If awarded, we will review the current data and identify the campuses with the greatest need. The criteria will include: 1) Authentic interest in pursuing a process to change the way the campus addresses the needs of students. 2) Evidence that demonstrates that behavioral incidents are impacting safety and academic achievement. 3.) Identifiable gaps and needs to improve school climate. 4) Willingness to be vulnerable and open to analyzing the current need for change as well as coaching. 5) Able to address scheduling challenges to attend significant training to learn best practices and implement accordingly. 6) Able to work with external partners and meet according to calendar requirements. 7) Able to articulate the campus needs and have a genuine interest in the development of the model. 8.) Commit to all deadlines and fidelity of implementation.

After evaluating the campus data and criteria stated above, the superintendent will make the final selections while also reviewing the committee recommendations.

2. Describe how the LEA will ensure that campus leaders and staff are committed to the success of the Student Support Program.

The LEA will ensure the campus leaders and staff are committed to the success of the Student Support Program by selecting campuses that have expressed interest, understand the need is great, and are committed to partner and collaborate with organizations that have developed research-based frameworks to address challenging behaviors that disrupt school culture and negatively impact academic achievement.

As the LEA supports the successful implementation of the student support program, it will be necessary to monitor and support staff members while they experience wins, roadblocks, and challenges. Below are some strategies the LEA will practice to ensure campus leaders and staff are supported by the LEA.

1. Build positive relationships with teams and partners.
2. Clear blueprints, framework, or plans to guide strategies and action steps.
3. Set clear expectations look-fors to guide process.
4. Consistently communicating and checking in for progress during one-on-one conferences, surveys, reports, or review of documents.
5. Providing feedback and encouraging.
6. Working together to overcome setbacks and working through obstacles.
7. Collaborating and holding each other to high expectations.

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9. Statutory/Program Requirements (Cont.)

3. Describe how the LEA will engage parents and families to solicit support for the program.

The FACE department, in collaboration with campuses involved, will meet with parents and families to communicate the purpose of the initiative. During the initial meeting the FACE department will gather input from parents and solicit support for the program. Parents will participate in the RYSS Parent Academy and breakout sessions will address the logistics of the program and how they will be able to support. These parents can become a liaison or advocate for other parents in need of support for their children. The process for engaging parent support for the program will include: 1) Clarity of Expectations: Being specific on how we want them to support the program. 2) Communication: Ongoing clear communication in the primary language. 3) Empowering parents: Providing a space where parents can advocate and articulate concerns and provide input. 4) Training: Provide training and include in advisory meetings so they become ambassadors of the program in the community. 5) Partnerships: Connecting parents to internal and external partners.

4. Describe how the LEA will ensure that there is adequate staff to support the establishment and implementation of the Student Support Program.

As the grant is awarded, we will assess the current availability of staff to serve on the project. Some of the funding from the program will be used to fill the staffing gaps while also working towards sustainability after the grant expires. Extensive planning and strategy sessions will be conducted with the finance department and board members including needs assessments (why are we engaging in the program) and planning for sustainability.

It is worth mentioning that the RYSS school district is part of the Tejano Center for Community Concerns nonprofit organization, and there are some programs within the non-profit that can be included in the training and student support systems. This will increase our ability to continue services during and after the grant expires.

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9. Statutory/Program Requirements (Cont.)

5. Describe how each of the campuses will be supported by the grant program, if awarded, currently conduct behavioral threat assessments and how the campus will incorporate current systems into the student support team structure.

Currently, our campuses have a multi-disciplinary threat assessment team that includes campus administrators, school-based officers, and a school counselor. Those campuses that do not have a school counselor engage an independent psychological evaluator. The process followed by the BTA is aligned to the Texas School Safety Center and includes the process of identifying developing concerns or threats, gathering information from multiple sources, maximizing resources to address concerns, monitoring outcomes and enhancing the campuses overall communication to mitigate potential threats. We believe that RYSS meets all requirements to ensure that each of our campuses is safe and secure for our students.

If granted the award, the process in place will continue; however, the Student Support Team will be able to fill the necessary gaps that we believe are equally as important as the process of mitigating that which is the wraparound services and social emotional development of students. The grant will support RYSS campuses by increasing human capital, adding necessary resources, and providing professional development that will focus on cultivating the skills (interpersonal, intrapersonal, cognitive) to support students' learning and development. Our goal is to eliminate threats by equipping students with the tools needed to develop healthy identities, self-manage their emotions, achieve personal goals, show empathy towards others, uphold supportive relationships, and make good decisions.

6. Describe how the LEA currently identifies student support needs and how it identifies and establishes partnerships with external mental health and behavioral health providers to meet student needs.

The school district has incorporated Behavioral Threat Assessment (BTA) teams to address concerns regarding risky behaviors that may place students at risk of harming themselves or others. The BTA team determines what interventions are needed and these may include referral to partners such as Baylor College of Medicine Telehealth services, emergency rooms, HMMR, and other providers. RYSS is experiencing an increase of students with suicide ideation and "cutting" (self-harm) that require we consult with a psychologist (consultant) who provides immediate support and action steps to parents, students and the campus learning community.

Our community is in an underserved neighborhood and resources are scarce. A large percentage of our students are from low socioeconomic backgrounds and many lack insurance and medical care. Our FACE department connects families with external partners, to the extent possible, however, it is urgent we have a reliable system in place to ensure our students receive quality support that is ongoing and sustainable.

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9. Statutory/Program Requirements (Cont.)

7. Describe how the LEA currently partners with the regional ESC to support improvement in student mental health, behavioral and emotional health, physical health and wellbeing, and improving academic outcomes for students.

RYSS is in the Region 4 ESC and our partnership is mainly aligned to professional development in the areas of emotional health, physical health, and wellbeing. Some of the trainings we have attended are Trauma-informed Practices, Positive Family Communication, Restorative Strategies, Bullying, Mental-Wellbeing, vision screening, hearing screening, Human Trafficking, and others. They also have books and reference materials that we use to guide some of the decisions regarding safety, wellbeing, and physical health.

Understanding that some researchers point to academic failure as one of the most powerful predictors of challenging behaviors; we partner heavily on PD that improves teacher practice. Some training examples are Science of Teaching Reading courses and certification, SPED conference, Emergent Bilingual Instructional Practices, Pathways to Reading Comprehension, STEM Literacy, and others. The ESC is also our partner with DMAC data system, T-TESS, T-PESS, Learning plans and ASCENDER. In addition, we also partner with the Harris County Department of Education (HCDE) to provide expertise in school safety, BTA, and trauma informed training.

8. Describe how the LEA will use this grant program to supplement current work to improve services and supports for the mental health, behavioral and emotional health, and physical health and wellness of students.

Although RYSS is engaging in practices to improve services and support for mental, behavioral, emotional health and overall wellness for students, we need to supplement our current work by aligning practices to research and best practice.

The TCSS will provide a student support program that will ground the challenging work of serving students that are experiencing behaviors or stressors. Since the TCSS will collaborate with the University of Texas and UT Institute for Excellence in Mental Health to develop content and training, we would greatly benefit from receiving quality education and training on improving our practice. We will also be able to develop a strategic plan to improve the school climate and implement an effective support team structure. For instance, the data tool provided by the grant will help identify students' needs in a systemic way, accelerate services, and as a result we will analyze if trends are making a positive impact in the wellbeing and academic growth of our students.

Coaching the current team to recognize and identify needs in the areas of mental health, behavioral and emotional wellbeing is another area this grant will be able to supplement our current work. Responsive and effective support is a constant wondering for the district and campus teams and the streamlined training, coaching and support will ensure we understand how to prioritize needs and provide the supports and assess if the actions taken improved or met the students' needs.

9. Enter the LEA Total Enrollment:

10. Enter the Regional Educational Service Center that serves the LEA:

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10. 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		Barrier	
Group		Barrier	
Group		Barrier	
Group		Barrier	

11. 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.

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.

Equitable Services Calculation

1. LEA's student enrollment	1727
2. Enrollment of all participating private schools	200
3. Total enrollment of LEA and all participating PNPs (line 1 plus line 2)	1927
4. Total current-year grant allocation	1000000
5. LEA reservation for direct administrative costs, not to exceed the grant's defined limit	20000
6. Total LEA amount for provision of ESSA PNP equitable services (line 4 minus line 5)	980000
7. Per-pupil LEA amount for provision of ESSA PNP equitable services (line 6 divided by line 3)	509.00
LEA's total required ESSA PNP equitable services reservation (line 7 times line 2)	101800

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12. 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

1.	Project Manager	94470
2.	Clerk	49838
3.	Counselor/Social Workers	266673
4.	Extra Duty Pay	39948
5.		

Professional and Contracted Services

6.	Required 6% of funds for technical assistance provided by the regional ESC	60000
7.	Required 10% of funds to the Texas Center for Student Supports	100000
8.	Professional Services	189550
9.		
10.		

Supplies and Materials

11.	Supplies and Materials	10000
12.		
13.		

Other Operating Costs

15.		
16.		
17.		

Debt Services

18.		
19.		

Capital Outlay

20.	Computers and Printer	50000
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Direct administrative costs:

Indirect administrative costs:

TOTAL GRANT AWARD REQUESTED:

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Appendix I: Negotiation and Amendments

Leave this section blank when completing the initial application for funding.

An amendment must be submitted when the program plan or budget is altered for the reasons described in the "When to Amend the Application" document posted on the Administering a Grant page of the TEA website and may be mailed OR faxed (not both). **To fax:** one copy of all sections pertinent to the amendment (including budget attachments), along with a completed and signed page 1, to either (512) 463-9811 or (512) 463-9564. **To mail:** three copies of all sections pertinent to the amendment (including budget attachments), along with a completed and signed page 1, to the address on page 1. More detailed amendment instructions can be found on the last page of the budget template.

You may duplicate this page.

For amendments, choose the section you wish to amend from the drop down menu on the left. In the text box on the right, describe the changes you are making and the reason for them.

Always work with the most recent negotiated or amended application. If you are requesting a revised budget, please include the budget attachments with your amendment.

Section Being Negotiated or Amended

Negotiated Change or Amendment

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